MEMOIRS OF THE AUTHOR OF A VINDICATION OF THE RIGHTS OF WOMAN

William Godwin

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Mary Wollstonecraft Godwin.

London, Published Jan.y 1798, by J. Johnson, St Pauls Church Yard.

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VINDICATION OF THE RIGHTS OF WOMAN.

By WILLIAM GODWIN.

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MEMOIRS.

IT has always appeared to me, that to give to the public ſome account of the life of a perſon of eminent merit deceaſed, is a duty incumbent on ſurvivors. It ſeldom happens that ſuch a perſon paſſes through life, without being the ſubject of malignant calumny, or thoughtleſs miſrepreſentation. It cannot happen that the public at large ſhould be on a footing with

 their

their intimate acquaintance, and be the obſerver of thoſe virtues which diſcover themſelves principally in perſonal intercourſe. Every benefactor of mankind is more or leſs influenced by a liberal paſſion for fame; and ſurvivors only pay a debt to theſe benefactors, when they aſſert and eſtabliſh on their part, the honour they loved. The juſtice which is thus done to the illuſtrious dead, converts into the faireſt ſource of animation and encouragement to thoſe who would follow in the ſame career. The human ſpecies at large is intereſted in this juſtice, as it teaches them to place their reſpect and affection, upon thoſe qualities which beſt deſerve to be eſteemed and loved. I cannot eaſily prevail on myſelf to doubt, that the more fully we are preſented with the picture and

ſtory

ſtory of ſuch perſons as the ſubject of the following narrative, the more generally ſhall we feel in ourſelves a ſympathy in their fate, and an attachment to their excellencies. There are not many individuals with whoſe character the public welfare and improvement are more intimately connected, than the author of a Vindication of the Rights of Woman.

The facts detailed in the following pages, are principally taken from the mouth of the perſon to whom they relate; and of the veracity and ingenuouſneſs of her habits, perhaps no one that was ever acquainted with her, entertains a doubt. The writer of this narrative, when he has met with perſons, that in any degree created to themſelves an intereſt and attachment in his mind, has always felt a curioſity to be acquainted with the ſcenes

through which they had paſſed, and the incidents that had contributed to form their underſtandings and character. Impelled by this ſentiment, he repeatedly led the converſation of her whoſe ſtory he now undertakes to record, to topics of this ſort; and, once or twice, he made notes in her preſence, of a few dates calculated to arrange the circumſtances in his mind. To the materials thus collected, he has added an induſtrious enquiry among the perſons moſt intimately acquainted with her at the different periods of her life.

CHAP.

CHAP. I.

1759—1775.

MARY Wollſtonecraft was born on the twenty-ſeventh of April 1759. Her father's name was Edward John, and the name of her mother Elizabeth, of the family of Dixons of Ballyſhannon, in the kingdom of Ireland. Her paternal grandfather was a reſpectable manufacturer in Spitalfields, and is ſuppoſed to have left to his ſon a property of about 10,000l. Three of her brothers and two ſiſters are ſtill living; their names, Edward, James, Charles, Eliza, and Everina. Of theſe, Edward only was older than herſelf.

I am doubtful whether the father of Mary was bred to any profeſſion; but, about the time of her birth, he reſorted, rather perhaps as an amuſement than a buſineſs, to the occupation of farming. He was of an active, and ſomewhat verſatile diſpoſition, and ſo frequently changed his abode, as to throw ſome ambiguity upon the place of her birth. She told me, that the doubt in her mind in that reſpect, lay between London, and a farm upon Epping Foreſt, which was the principal ſcene of the firſt five years of her life.

Mary was diſtinguiſhed in early youth, by the indications of that exquiſite ſenſibility, ſoundneſs of underſtanding, and deciſion of character, which were the leading features of her mind through the courſe of her ſubſequent

quent life. She experienced in the firſt period of her exiſtence, few of thoſe indulgences and marks of affection, which are principally calculated to ſooth the ſubjection and ſorrows of our early years. She was not the favourite either of her father or mother. Her father was a man of a quick and impetuous temper, ſubject to alternate fits of kindneſs and ſeverity. In his family he was abſolute, and his wife appears to have been the firſt, and moſt ſubmiſſive of his ſubjects. The mother's partiality was fixed upon the eldeſt ſon, and her ſyſtem of government relative to Mary, was characterized by conſiderable rigour. She, at length, became convinced of her miſtake, and adopted a different plan with her younger daughters. When, in the Wrongs of Wo-

man, Mary ſpeaks of " the petty cares which obſcured the morning of her heroine's life; continual reſtraint in the moſt trivial matters; unconditional ſubmiſſion to orders, which, as a mere child, ſhe ſoon diſcovered to be unreaſonable, becauſe inconſiſtent and contradictory; and the being often obliged to ſit, in the preſence of her parents, for three or four hours together, without daring to utter a word;" ſhe is, I believe, to be conſidered as tracing the outline of the firſt period of her own exiſtence.

But it was in vain, that the blighting winds of unkindneſs or indifference, ſeemed deſtined to counteract the ſuperiority of Mary's mind. It ſurmounted every obſtacle; and, by degrees, from a perſon little conſidered in the family, ſhe became in ſome ſort its

its director and umpire. The rigidneſs of her education occaſioned her many a heart-ache. She was not formed to be the contented and unreſiſting ſubject of a deſpot; but I have heard her remark more than once, that, when ſhe felt ſhe had done wrong, the reproof or chaſtiſement of her mother, inſtead of being a terror to her, ſhe found to be the only thing capable of reconciling her to herſelf. The blows of her father on the contrary, which were the mere ebullitions of a paſſionate temper, inſtead of humbling, rouſed her indignation. Upon ſuch occaſions ſhe felt her ſuperiority, and was apt to betray marks of contempt. The quickneſs of her father's temper, led him ſometimes to menace ſimilar violence to his wife. When that was the caſe, Mary would often throw herſelf between

tween the deſpot and his victim, with the purpoſe to receive upon her own perſon, the blows that might be directed againſt her mother. She has even laid whole nights at their chamber-door, when, miſtakenly, or with reaſon, ſhe apprehended that her father might break out into paroxyſms of violence. The conduct he purſued towards the members of his family, was ſimilar to that which he obſerved towards animals. He was for the moſt part extravagantly fond of them; but, when he was diſpleaſed, and this frequently happened, and for trivial reaſons, his anger was alarming. Mary was, what Dr. Johnſon would have called, "a very good hater." Upon ſome occaſion of ſeverity exerciſed by her father to one of his dogs, ſhe was accuſtomed to ſpeak of her emotions of abhorrence,

horrence, as having ariſen to agony. In a word, her conduct during her girliſh years, was ſuch, as to extort ſome portion of affection from her mother, and to hold her father in conſiderable awe.

In one reſpect, the ſyſtem of education of the mother appears to have had merit. All her children were vigorous and healthy. This ſeems very much to depend upon the management of our infant years. It is affirmed by ſome perſons of the preſent day, eminently ſkilled in the ſcience of health and diſeaſe, that there is no period of human life ſo little ſubject to mortality, as the period of infancy. Yet, from the miſmanagement to which children are expoſed, many of the diſeaſes of childhood are rendered fatal, and more perſons actually die in that, than in any other

other ſtage of human life. Mary had projected a work upon this ſubject, which ſhe had carefully conſidered, and well underſtood. She has indeed left a ſpecimen of her ſkill in this reſpect in her eldeſt daughter, three years and a half old, who is a ſingular example of vigorous conſtitution and florid health. Mr. Anthony Carliſle ſurgeon of Soho-ſquare, a name eminently dear to genius and ſcience, had promiſed to reviſe her production. This is but one of numerous purpoſes of activity and uſefulneſs, which her untimely death has fatally terminated.

The ruſtic ſituation in which Mary ſpent her infancy, no doubt contributed to confirm the ſtamina of her conſtitution. She ſported in the open air, and amidſt the pictureſque and refreſhing ſcenes of nature, for which ſhe always

ways retained the moſt exquiſite reliſh. Dolls and the other toys uſually appropriated to the amuſement of female children, ſhe held in contempt; and felt a greater propenſity to join in the active and hardy ſports of her brothers, than to confine herſelf to thoſe of her own ſex.

About the time that Mary completed the fifth year of her age, her father removed to a ſmall diſtance from his former habitation upon Epping Foreſt, and took a farm near the Whalebone, a little way out of the Chelmsford road. In Michaelmas 1765, he once more changed his reſidence, and occupied a convenient houſe behind the town of Barking in Eſſex, eight miles from London. In this ſituation, ſome of their neareſt neighbours were, Bamber Gaſcoyne, eſquire, ſucceſſively member

member of parliament for ſeveral boroughs, and his brother, Mr. Joſeph Gaſcoyne. I mention this circumſtance on account of its connection with the topography of the ſpot. Here Mr. Wollſtonecraft remained for three years. In September 1796, I accompanied my wife in a viſit to this ſpot. No perſon reviewed with greater ſenſibility, the ſcenes of her childhood. We found the houſe uninhabited, and the garden in a wild and ruinous ſtate. She renewed her acquaintance with the market-place, the ſtreets, and the wharf, the latter of which we found crowded with barges, and full of activity.

In Michaelmas 1768, Mr. Wollſtonecraft again removed to a farm near Beverley in Yorkſhire. Here the family remained ſix years, and conſequently

quently Mary did not quit this reſidence, till ſhe had attained the age of fifteen years and five months. The principal part of her ſchool-education paſſed during this period; but it was not to any advantage of infant literature, that ſhe was indebted for her ſubſequent eminence; her education in this reſpect was merely ſuch as was afforded by the day-ſchools of the place in which ſhe reſided. To her recollection Beverley appeared a handſome town, ſurrounded by genteel families, and with a brilliant aſſembly. She was ſurprized, when ſhe viſited it in 1795, upon her voyage to Norway, to find the reality ſo much below the picture in her imagination.

Hitherto Mr. Wollſtonecraft had been a farmer; but the reſtleſſneſs of his diſpoſition would not ſuffer him to content

content himſelf with the occupation in which for ſome years he had been engaged, and the temptation of a commercial ſpeculation being held out to him, he removed to a houſe in Queen's-Row, in Hoxton, near London, for the purpoſe of its execution. Here he remained for a year and a half; but being fruſtrated in his expectations of profit, he, after that term, gave up the project in which he had engaged, and returned to his former purſuits. During this reſidence at Hoxton, the writer of theſe memoirs inhabited, as a ſtudent, the diſſenting college in that place. It might perhaps be a queſtion of curious ſpeculation to enquire, what would have been the amount of the difference in the purſuits and enjoyments of each party, if they had met, and conſidered each other with the

ſame

ſame diſtinguiſhing regard in 1776, as they were afterwards impreſſed with in the year 1796. The writer had then completed the twentieth, and Mary the ſeventeenth year of her age. Which would have been predominant; the diſadvantages of obſcurity, and the preſſure of a family; or the gratifications and improvement that might have flowed from their intercourſe?

One of the acquaintances Mary formed at this time was with a Mr. Clare, who inhabited the next houſe to that which was tenanted by her father, and to whom ſhe was probably in ſome degree indebted for the early cultivation of her mind. Mr. Clare was a clergyman, and appears to have been a humouriſt of a ſingular caſt. In his perſon he was deformed and delicate; and his figure, I am told, bore

a reſemblance to that of the celebrated Pope. He had a fondneſs for poetry, and was not deſtitute of taſte. His manners were expreſſive of a tenderneſs and benevolence, the demonſtrations of which appear to have been ſomewhat too artificially cultivated. His habits were thoſe of a perfect recluſe. He ſeldom went out of his drawing-room, and he ſhowed to a friend of Mary a pair of ſhoes, which had ſerved him, he ſaid, for fourteen years. Mary frequently ſpent days and weeks together, at the houſe of Mr. Clare.

It is eaſy to perceive that this connection was of a character different from thoſe to which ſhe had hitherto been accuſtomed. It were to be deſired that the biographer of perſons of eminent talents, ſhould poſſeſs the means

means of analyſing the cauſes by which they were modified, and tracing methodically the progreſs of their minds. But though this can ſeldom be performed, he ought probably not to neglect to record the fragments of progreſs and cultivation that may have come down to him. A cenſurable faſtidiouſneſs only, could teach us to reject information, becauſe that information is imperfect.

CHAP. II.

1775—1783.

A CONNECTION ſtill more memorable originated about this time, between Mary and a perſon of her own ſex, for whom ſhe contracted a friendſhip ſo warm, as for years to have conſtituted the ruling paſſion of her mind. The name of this perſon was Frances Blood; ſhe was two years older than Mary. Her reſidence was at that time at Newington Butts, a village near the ſouthern extremity of the metropolis; and the perſon who introduced them to each other's acquaintance, was Mrs. Clare, wife of the

the gentleman already mentioned, who was on a footing of conſiderable intimacy with both parties. The acquaintance of Fanny, like that of Mr. Clare, contributed to ripen the immature talents of Mary.

The ſituation in which Fanny was introduced to her, was peculiarly adapted to conciliate a mind of ſimplicity and affection. Mary was conducted to the door of a ſmall houſe, but furniſhed with much neatneſs and propriety. The firſt object that caught her ſight, was a young woman of a ſlender and elegant form, and eighteen years of age, buſily employed in feeding and managing ſome children, born of the ſame parents, but conſiderably inferior to her in age. The impreſſion Mary received from a ſcene, which ſo happily accorded with her two moſt

cheriſhed conceptions, the pictureſque and the affectionate, was indelible; and, before the interview was concluded, ſhe had taken, in her heart, the vows of an eternal friendſhip.

Fanny was a young woman of extraordinary accompliſhments. She ſung and played with taſte. She drew with uncommon fidelity and neatneſs; and, by the exertion of this talent, for ſome time maintained her father, mother, and family, but ultimately ruined her health by her extraordinary aſſiduity. She read and wrote with conſiderable application; and the ſame ideas of minute and delicate propriety followed her in theſe, as in her other occupations.

Mary, a wild, but animated and aſpiring girl of ſixteen, contemplated Fanny, in the firſt inſtance, with ſentiments

timents of inferiority and reverence. Though they were much together, yet, the diſtance of their habitations being conſiderable, they ſupplied the want of more frequent interviews by an aſſiduous correſpondence. Mary found Fanny's letters better ſpelt and better indited than her own, and felt herſelf abaſhed. She had hitherto paid but a ſuperficial attention to literature. She had read, to gratify the ardour of an inextinguiſhable thirſt of knowledge; but ſhe had not thought of writing as an art. Her ambition to excel was now awakened, and ſhe applied herſelf with paſſion and earneſtneſs. Fanny undertook to be her inſtructor; and, as far as related to accuracy and method, her leſſons were given with conſiderable ſkill.

It has already been mentioned that,

in the ſpring of the year 1776, Mr. Wollſtonecraft quitted his ſituation at Hoxton, and returned to his former agricultural purſuits. The ſituation upon which he now fixed was in Wales, a circumſtance that was felt as a ſevere blow to Mary's darling ſpirit of friendſhip.

Wales however was Mr. Wollſtonecraft's reſidence for little more than a year. He returned to the neighbourhood of London; and Mary, whoſe aſcendancy in ſome reſpects had now become conſiderable, was able to determine his choice in favour of the village of Walworth, that ſhe might be near her choſen friend. It was probably before this, that ſhe had once or twice ſtarted the idea of quitting the parental roof, and providing for herſelf. But ſhe was prevailed upon to reſign this

this idea, and conditions were ſtipulated with her, relative to her having an apartment in the houſe that ſhould be excluſively her own, and her commanding the other requiſites of ſtudy. She did not however think herſelf fairly treated in theſe inſtances, and either the conditions abovementioned, or ſome others, were not obſerved in the ſequel, with the fidelity ſhe expected. In one caſe, ſhe had procured an eligible ſituation, and every thing was ſettled reſpecting her removal to it, when the intreaties and tears of her mother led her to ſurrender her own inclinations, and abandon the engagement.

Theſe however were only temporary delays. Her propenſities continued the ſame, and the motives by which ſhe was influenced were unabated. In the year 1778, ſhe being nineteen years

of

of age, a propoſal was made to her of living as a companion with a Mrs. Dawſon of Bath, the widow of an opulent tradeſman of the city of London. Upon enquiry ſhe found that Mrs. Dawſon was a woman of great peculiarity of temper, that ſhe had had a variety of companions in ſucceſſion, and that no one had found it practicable to continue with her. Mary was not diſcouraged by this information, and accepted the ſituation, with a reſolution that ſhe would effect in this article, what none of her predeceſſors had been able to do. In the ſequel ſhe had reaſon to conſider the account ſhe had received as ſufficiently accurate, but ſhe did not relax in her endeavours. By method, conſtancy and firmneſs, ſhe found the means of making her ſituation tolerable; and Mrs. Dawſon would occa-

occaſionally confeſs, that Mary was the only perſon that had lived with her in that ſituation, in her treatment of whom ſhe had felt herſelf under any reſtraint.

With Mrs. Dawſon ſhe continued to reſide for two years, and only left her, ſummoned by the melancholy circumſtance of her mother's rapidly declining health. Mary felt in this intelligence an irreſiſtible motive, and eagerly returned to the paternal roof, which ſhe had before reſolutely quitted. The reſidence of her father at this time, was at Enfield near London. He had, I believe, given up agriculture from the time of his quitting Wales, it appearing to be now leſs a ſource of profit than loſs, and it being conſequently thought adviſable that he ſhould rather live upon the intereſt of his fortune.

The

The illneſs of Mrs. Wollſtonecraft was lingering, but hopeleſs. Mary was aſſiduous in her attendance upon her mother. At firſt, every attention was received with acknowledgments and gratitude; but, as the attentions grew habitual, and the health of the mother more and more wretched, they were rather exacted, than received. Nothing would be taken by the unfortunate patient, but from the hands of Mary; reſt was denied night or day; and, by the time nature was exhauſted in the parent, the daughter was qualified to aſſume her place, and become in turn herſelf a patient. The laſt words her mother ever uttered were, "A little patience, and all will be over!" and theſe words are repeatedly referred to by Mary in the courſe of her writings.

Upon the death of Mrs. Wollſtonecraft,

craft, Mary bad a final adieu to the roof of her father. According to my memorandums, I find her next the inmate of Fanny at Walham Green, near the village of Fulham. Upon what plan they now lived together I am unable to afcertain; certainly not that of Mary's becoming an additional burthen upon the induftry of her friend. Thus fituated, their intimacy ripened; they approached more nearly to a footing of equality; and their attachment became more rooted and active.

Mary was ever ready at the call of diftrefs, and, in particular, during her whole life was eager and active to promote the welfare of every member of her family. In 1780 fhe attended the death-bed of her mother; in 1782 fhe was fummoned in a not lefs critical circumftance, to attend her fifter Eliza, married

married to a Mr. Biſhop, who, ſubſequently to a dangerous lying-in, remained for ſome months in a very afflicting ſituation. Mary continued with her ſiſter without intermiſſion, to her perfect recovery.

CHAP.

CHAP. III.

1783—1785.

MARY had now arrived at the twenty-fourth year of her age. Her project, five years before, had been perſonal independence; it was now uſefulneſs. In the ſolitude of attendance on her ſiſter's illneſs, ſhe had had leiſure to ruminate upon plans for this purpoſe. Her expanded mind led her to ſeek ſomething more arduous than the mere removal of perſonal vexations; and the ſenſibility of her heart would not ſuffer her to reſt in ſolitary gratifications. The derangement of her father's affairs daily became more and more glaring; and a ſmall inde-

independent proviſion made for herſelf and her ſiſters, appears to have been ſacrificed in the wreck. For ten years, from 1782 to 1792, ſhe may be ſaid to have been, in a great degree, the victim of a deſire to promote the benefit of others. She did not foreſee the ſevere diſappointment with which an excluſive purpoſe of this ſort is pregnant; ſhe was inexperienced enough to lay a ſtreſs upon the conſequent gratitude of thoſe ſhe benefited; and ſhe did not ſufficiently conſider that, in proportion as we involve ourſelves in the intereſts and ſociety of others, we acquire a more exquiſite ſenſe of their defects, and are tormented with their untractableneſs and folly. Her miſtakes in this reſpect were two: ſhe engaged herſelf too minutely and too deeply in the care of their welfare; and ſhe was too much impreſſed

impreſſed by any ſeeming want of ingenuous and honourable feeling on the part of thoſe ſhe benefited. In the mixed ſcene of human life, it is neceſſary that, while we take ſome care for others, we ſhould leave ſcope for the diſplay of their own prudence and reaſon; and that, when we have diſcharged our duty reſpecting them, we ſhould be habituated to derive a principal conſolation from the conſciouſneſs of having done ſo.

The project upon which ſhe determined, was that of a day-ſchool, to be ſuperintended by Fanny Blood, herſelf, and her two ſiſters. They accordingly opened one in the year 1783, at the village of Iſlington; but in the courſe of a few months removed it to Newington Green.

Here Mary formed ſome acquaintances that influenced the future

events of her life. The firſt of theſe in her own eſtimation, was Dr. Richard Price, well known for his political and mathematical calculations, and univerſally eſteemed by thoſe who knew him, for the ſimplicity of his manners, and the ardour of his benevolence. The regard conceived by theſe two perſons for each other, was mutual, and partook of a ſpirit of the pureſt attachment. Mary had been bred in the principles of the church of England, but her eſteem for this venerable preacher led her occaſionally to attend his public inſtructions. Her religion was, in reality, little allied to any ſyſtem of forms; and, as ſhe has often told me, was founded rather in taſte, than in the niceties of polemical diſcuſſion. Her mind conſtitutionally attached itſelf to the ſublime and the amiable.

amiable. She found an inexpreſſible delight in the beauties of nature, and in the ſplendid reveries of the imagination. But nature itſelf, ſhe thought, would be no better than a vaſt blank, if the mind of the obſerver did not ſupply it with an animating ſoul. When ſhe walked amidſt the wonders of nature, ſhe was accuſtomed to converſe with her God. To her mind he was pictured as not leſs amiable, generous and kind, than great, wiſe and exalted. In fact, ſhe had received few leſſons of religion in her youth, and her religion was almoſt entirely of her own creating. But ſhe was not on that account the leſs attached to it. The tenets of her ſyſtem were the growth of her own moral taſte, and her religion therefore had always been a gratification, never a terror to her. She expected a future

ſtate; but ſhe would not allow her ideas of that ſtate to be modified by the notions of judgment and retribution. From this ſketch, it is evident, that the pleaſure ſhe took in an occaſional attendance upon the ſermons of Dr. Price, was not accompanied with a ſuperſtitious adherence to his doctrines. The fact is, that, as far down as the year 1787, ſhe regularly frequented public worſhip, for the moſt part according to the forms of the church of England. After that period her attendance became leſs conſtant, and in no long time was wholly diſcontinued. I believe it may be admitted as a maxim, that no perſon of a well furniſhed mind, that has ſhaken off the implicit ſubjection of youth, and is not the zealous partizan of a ſect, can bring himſelf to conform to the

the public and regular routine of ſermons and prayers.

Another of the friends ſhe acquired at this period, was Mrs. Burgh, widow of the author of the Political Diſquiſitions, a woman univerſally well ſpoken of for the warmth and purity of her benevolence. In the catalogue of friends acquired at this period, I may likewiſe include the rev. John Hewlet, a popular preacher in the eſtabliſhed church, whom I ſhall have further occaſion to mention hereafter.

It was alſo during her reſidence at Newington Green, that ſhe was introduced to the acquaintance of Dr. Johnſon, who was at that time conſidered as in ſome ſort the father of Engliſh literature. The doctor treated her with particular kindneſs and attention, had a long converſation with her, and de-

ſired her to repeat her viſit often. This ſhe firmly purpoſed to do; but the news of his laſt illneſs, and then of his death, intervened to prevent her ſeeing him a ſecond time.

I have already ſaid that Fanny's health had been materially injured by her inceſſant labours for the maintenance of her family. She had alſo ſuffered a diſappointment, which preyed upon her mind. To theſe different cauſes of ill health, ſhe became gradually a victim; and at length diſcovered all the ſymptoms of a pulmonary conſumption. By the medical men that attended her, ſhe was adviſed to try the effects of a ſouthern climate; and, about the beginning of the year 1785, ſailed for Liſbon.

The firſt feeling with which Mary had contemplated her friend, was a ſentiment

ſentiment of inferiority and reverence; but that, from the operation of a ten years' acquaintance, was conſiderably changed. Fanny had originally been far before her in literary attainments; this diſparity no longer exiſted. In whatever degree Mary might endeavour to free herſelf from the deluſions of ſelf eſteem, this period of obſervation upon her own mind, and that of her friend, could not paſs, without her perceiving that there were ſome eſſential characteriſtics of genius, which ſhe poſſeſſed, and in which her friend was deficient. The principal of theſe was a firmneſs of mind, an unconquerable greatneſs of ſoul, by which, after a ſhort internal ſtruggle, ſhe was for the moſt part accuſtomed to riſe above difficulties and ſuffering. Whatever Mary undertook, ſhe perhaps in all inſtances accompliſhed; and, to her

lofty ſpirit, ſcarcely any thing ſhe deſired, appeared hard to perform. Fanny, on the contrary, was a woman of a timid and irreſolute nature, accuſtomed to yield to difficulties, and probably priding herſelf in this morbid ſoftneſs of her temper. One inſtance that I have heard Mary relate of this ſort, was, that, at a certain time, Fanny, diſſatisfied with her domeſtic ſituation, expreſſed an earneſt deſire to have a home of her own. Mary, who felt nothing more preſſing than to relieve the inconveniences of her friend, determined to accompliſh this object for her. It coſt her infinite exertions; but at length ſhe was able to announce to Fanny that a houſe was prepared, and that ſhe was on the ſpot to receive her. The anſwer which Fanny returned to the letter of her friend, conſiſted almoſt wholly of an enumeration

of

of objections to the quitting her family, which ſhe had not thought of before, but which now appeared to her of conſiderable weight.

The judgment which experience had taught Mary to form of the mind of her friend, determined her in the advice ſhe gave, at the period to which I have brought down the ſtory. Fanny was recommended to ſeek a ſofter climate, but ſhe had no funds to defray the expence of ſuch an undertaking. At this time Mr. Hugh Skeys of Dublin, but then reſident in the kingdom of Portugal, paid his addreſſes to her. The ſtate of her health Mary conſidered as ſuch as ſcarcely to afford the ſhadow of a hope; it was not therefore a time at which it was moſt obvious to think of marriage. She conceived however that nothing ſhould be omitted, which might alleviate, if it could not cure; and

and accordingly urged her ſpeedy acceptance of the propoſal. Fanny accordingly made the voyage to Liſbon; and the marriage took place on the twenty-fourth of February 1785. The advice of Mary in this inſtance, though dictated by the ſincereſt anxiety for her friend's welfare, is ſcarcely entitled to our approbation.

From change of climate and ſituation Fanny found but little benefit; and her life was only prolonged by a period of pregnancy, which ſoon declared itſelf. Mary, in the mean time, was impreſſed with the idea that her friend would die in this diſtant country; and ſhocked with the recollection of her ſeparation from the circle of her friends, determined to paſs over to Liſbon to attend her. This reſolution was treated by her acquaintance as viſionary; but ſhe was not to be diverted

ed from her point. She had not money to defray her expences: ſhe muſt quit for a long time the ſchool, the very exiſtence of which probably depended upon her exertions.

No perſon was ever better formed for the buſineſs of education; if it be not a ſort of abſurdity to ſpeak of a perſon as formed for an inferior object, who is in poſſeſſion of talents, in the fulleſt degree adequate to ſomething on a more important and comprehenſive ſcale. Mary had a quickneſs of temper, not apt to take offence with inadvertencies, but which led her to look into the minds of her acquaintance, and to approve or be diſpleaſed, in proportion as they manifeſted thoſe ſentiments, which the perſons and the treatment they met with, ought, as ſhe conceived, to exite. She was occaſionally

ſevere

ſevere and imperious in her reſentments; and, when ſhe ſtrongly diſapproved, was apt to expreſs her cenſure in terms that gave a very humiliating ſenſation to the perſon againſt whom it was directed. Her diſpleaſure however never aſſumed its ſevereſt form, but when it was barbed by diſappointment. Where ſhe expected little, ſhe was not very rigid in her cenſure of error.

But, to whatever the defects of her temper might amount, they entered not into her intercourſe with her inferiors in ſtation or age. She ſcorned to make uſe of an ungenerous advantage, or to wound the defenceleſs. To her ſervants there never was a miſtreſs more conſiderate or more kind. With children ſhe was the mirror of patience. Perhaps, in all her extenſive experience upon the ſubject of education, ſhe never betrayed

ed one ſymptom of iraſcibility. Her heart was the ſeat of every benevolent feeling; and accordingly, in all her intercourſe with children, it was kindneſs and ſympathy alone that prompted her conduct. Sympathy, when it mounts to a certain height, inevitably begets affection in the perſon towards whom it is exerciſed; and I have heard her ſay, that ſhe never was concerned in the education of one child, who was not perſonally attached to her, and earneſtly concerned not to incur her diſpleaſure. Another eminent advantage ſhe poſſeſſed in the buſineſs of education, was that ſhe was little troubled with ſcepticiſm and uncertainty. She ſaw, as it were by intuition, the path which her mind determined to purſue, and had a firm confidence in her

her own power to effect what ſhe deſired. Yet, with all this, ſhe had ſcarcely a tincture of obſtinacy. She carefully watched ſymptoms as they roſe, and the ſucceſs of her experiments; and governed herſelf accordingly. While I thus enumerate her more than maternal qualities, it is impoſſible not to feel a pang at the recollection of her orphan children!

Though her friends earneſtly diſſuaded her from the journey to Liſbon, ſhe found among them a willingneſs to facilitate the execution of her project, when it was once fixed. Mrs. Burgh in particular, ſupplied her with money, which however ſhe always conceived came from Dr. Price. This loan, I have reaſon to believe, was faithfully repaid.

Her

Her reſidence in Liſbon was not long. She arrived but a ſhort time before her friend was prematurely delivered, and the event was fatal to both mother and child. Frances Blood, hitherto the choſen object of Mary's attachment, died on the twenty-ninth of November 1785. It is thus that ſhe ſpeaks of her in her Letters from Norway, written ten years after her deceaſe. "When a warm heart has received ſtrong impreſſions, they are not to be effaced. Emotions become ſentiments; and the imagination renders even tranſient ſenſations permanent, by fondly retracing them. I cannot without a thrill of delight, recollect views I have ſeen, which are not to be forgotten, nor looks I have felt in every nerve, which I ſhall never more meet. The

The grave has closed over a dear friend, the friend of my youth; still she is present with me, and I hear her soft voice warbling as I stray over the heath."

CHAP.

CHAP. IV.

1785—1787.

NO doubt the voyage to Liſbon tended conſiderably to enlarge the underſtanding of Mary. She was admitted into the beſt company the Engliſh factory afforded. She made many profound obſervations on the character of the natives, and the baleful effects of ſuperſtition. The obſequies of Fanny, which it was neceſſary to perform by ſtealth and in darkneſs, tended to invigorate theſe obſervations in her mind.

She ſailed upon her voyage home about the twentieth of December. On

this occaſion a circumſtance occurred, that deſerves to be recorded. While they were on their paſſage, they fell in with a French veſſel, in great diſtreſs, and in daily expectation of foundering at ſea, at the ſame time that it was almoſt deſtitute of proviſions. The Frenchman hailed them, and intreated the Engliſh captain, in conſideration of his melancholy ſituation, to take him and his crew on board. The Engliſhman repreſented in reply, that his ſtock of proviſions was by no means adequate to ſuch an additional number of mouths, and abſolutely refuſed compliance. Mary, ſhocked at his apparent inſenſibility, took up the cauſe of the ſufferers, and threatened the captain to have him called to a ſevere account, when he arrived in England. She finally prevailed, and had the ſatisfaction

tion to reflect, that the perſons in queſtion poſſibly owed their lives to her interpoſition.

When ſhe arrived in England, ſhe found that her ſchool had ſuffered conſiderably in her abſence. It can be little reproach to any one, to ſay that they were found incapable of ſupplying her place. She not only excelled in the management of the children, but had alſo the talent of being attentive and obliging to the parents, without degrading herſelf.

The period at which I am now arrived is important, as conducting to the firſt ſtep of her literary career. Mr. Hewlet had frequently mentioned literature to Mary as a certain ſource of pecuniary produce, and had urged her to make trial of the truth of his judgment. At this time ſhe was de-

ſirous of aſſiſting the father and mother of Fanny in an object they had in view, the tranſporting themſelves to Ireland; and, as uſual, what ſhe deſired in a pecuniary view, ſhe was ready to take on herſelf to effect. For this purpoſe ſhe wrote a duodecimo pamphlet of one hundred and ſixty pages, entitled, Thoughts on the Education of Daughters. Mr. Hewlet obtained from the bookſeller, Mr. Johnſon in St. Paul's Church Yard, ten guineas for the copy-right of this manuſcript, which ſhe immediately applied to the object for the ſake of which the pamphlet was written.

Every thing urged Mary to put an end to the affair of the ſchool. She was diſſatisfied with the different appearance it preſented upon her return, from the ſtate in which ſhe left it.

Experience

Experience impreſſed upon her a rooted averſion to that ſort of a cohabitation with her ſiſters, which the project of the ſchool impoſed. Cohabitation is a point of delicate experiment, and is, in a majority of inſtances, pregnant with ill-humour and unhappineſs. The activity and ardent ſpirit of adventure which characterized Mary, were not felt in an equal degree by her ſiſters, ſo that a diſproportionate ſhare of every burthen attendant upon the ſituation, fell to her lot. On the other hand, they could ſcarcely perhaps be perfectly eaſy, in obſerving the ſuperior degree of deference and court, which her merit extorted from almoſt every one that knew her. Her kindneſs for them was not diminiſhed, but ſhe reſolved that the mode of its exertion in future ſhould be different, tend-

ing to their benefit, without intrenching upon her own liberty.

Thus circumſtanced, a propoſal was made her, ſuch as, regarding only the ſituations through which ſhe had lately paſſed, is uſually termed advantageous. This was, to accept the office of governeſs to the daughters of lord viſcount Kingſborough, eldeſt ſon to the earl of Kingſton of the kingdom of Ireland. The terms held out to her were ſuch as ſhe determined to accept, at the ſame time reſolving to retain the ſituation only for a ſhort time. Independence was the object after which ſhe thirſted, and ſhe was fixed to try whether it might not be found in literary occupation. She was deſirous however firſt to accumulate a ſmall ſum of money, which ſhould enable her to conſider at leiſure the different literary engagements

engagements that might offer, and provide in ſome degree for the eventual deficiency of her earlieſt attempts.

The ſituation in the family of lord Kingſborough, was offered to her through the medium of the rev. Mr. Prior, at that time one of the under maſters of Eton ſchool. She ſpent ſome time at the houſe of this gentleman, immediately after her giving up the ſchool at Newington Green. Here ſhe had an opportunity of making an accurate obſervation upon the manners and conduct of that celebrated ſeminary, and the ideas ſhe retained of it were by no means favourable. By all that ſhe ſaw, ſhe was confirmed in a very favourite opinion of her's, in behalf of day-ſchools, where, as ſhe expreſſed it, " children have the opportunity of converſing with children, with-

out interfering with domeſtic affections, the foundation of virtue."

Though her reſidence in the family of lord Kingſborough continued ſcarcely more than twelve months, ſhe left behind her, with them and their connections, a very advantageous impreſſion. The governeſſes the young ladies had hitherto had, were only a ſpecies of upper ſervants, controlled in every thing by the mother; Mary inſiſted upon the unbounded exerciſe of her own diſcretion. When the young ladies heard of their governeſs coming from England, they heard in imagination of a new enemy, and declared their reſolution to guard themſelves accordingly. Mary however ſpeedily ſucceeded in gaining their confidence, and the friendſhip that ſoon grew up between her and Margaret King, now

counteſs

counteſs Mount Caſhel, the eldeſt daughter, was in an uncommon degree cordial and affectionate. Mary always ſpoke of this young lady in terms of the trueſt applauſe, both in relation to the eminence of her intellectual powers, and the ingenuous amiableneſs of her diſpoſition. Lady Kingſborough, from the beſt motives, had impoſed upon her daughters a variety of prohibitions, both as to the books they ſhould read, and in many other reſpects. Theſe prohibitions had their uſual effects; inordinate deſire for the things forbidden, and clandeſtine indulgence. Mary immediately reſtored the children to their liberty, and undertook to govern them by their affections only. The conſequence was, that their indulgences were moderate, and they were uneaſy under any indulgence that had not the ſanction

ſanction of their governeſs. The ſalutary effects of the new ſyſtem of education were ſpeedily viſible; and lady Kingſborough ſoon felt no other uneaſineſs, than leſt the children ſhould love their governeſs better than their mother.

Mary made many friends in Ireland, among the perſons who viſited lord Kingſborough's houſe, for ſhe always appeared there with the air of an equal, and not of a dependent. I have heard her mention the ludicrous diſtreſs of a woman of quality, whoſe name I have forgotten, that, in a large company, ſingled out Mary, and entered into a long converſation with her. After the converſation was over, ſhe enquired whom ſhe had been talking with, and found to her utter mortification

fication and diſmay, that it was Miſs King's governeſs.

One of the perſons among her Iriſh acquaintance, whom Mary was accuſtomed to ſpeak of with the higheſt reſpect, was Mr. George Ogle, member of parliament for the county of Wexford. She held his talents in very high eſtimation; ſhe was ſtrongly prepoſſeſſed in favour of the goodneſs of his heart; and ſhe always ſpoke of him as the moſt perfect gentleman ſhe had ever known. She felt the regret of a diſappointed friend, at the part he has ſince taken in the politics of his country.

Lord Kingſborough's family paſſed the ſummer of the year 1787 at Briſtol Hot-Wells, and had formed the project of proceeding from thence to the continent, a tour in which Mary purpoſed

poſed to accompany them. The plan however was ultimately given up, and Mary in conſequence cloſed her connection with them earlier than ſhe otherwiſe had purpoſed to do.

At Briſtol Hot-Wells ſhe compoſed the little book which bears the title of Mary, a Fiction. A conſiderable part of this ſtory conſiſts, with certain modifications, of the incidents of her own friendſhip with Fanny. All the events that do not relate to that ſubject are fictitious.

This little work, if Mary had never produced any thing elſe, would ſerve, with perſons of true taſte and ſenſibility, to eſtabliſh the eminence of her genius. The ſtory is nothing. He that looks into the book only for incident, will probably lay it down with diſguſt. But the feelings are of the trueſt and moſt

moſt exquiſite claſs; every circumſtance is adorned with that ſpecies of of imagination, which enliſts itſelf under the banners of delicacy and ſentiment. A work of ſentiment, as it is called, is too often another name for a work of affectation. He that ſhould imagine that the ſentiments of this book are affected, would I believe, betray a total, want of ſenſibility and taſte.

CHAP.

CHAP. V.

1787—1790.

BEING now determined to enter upon her literary plan, Mary came immediately from Briſtol to the metropolis. Her conduct under this circumſtance was ſuch as to do credit both to her own heart, and that of Mr. Johnſon, her publiſher, between whom and herſelf there now commenced an intimate friendſhip. She had ſeen him upon occaſion of publiſhing her Thoughts on the Education of Daughters, and ſhe addreſſed two or three letters to him during her reſidence in Ireland.

Ireland. Upon her arrival in London in Auguſt 1787, ſhe went immediately to his houſe, and frankly explained to him her purpoſe, at the ſame time requeſting his advice and aſſiſtance as to its execution. After a ſhort converſation, Mr. Johnſon invited her to make his houſe her home, till ſhe ſhould have ſuited herſelf with a fixed reſidence. She accordingly reſided at this time two or three weeks under his roof.

At Michaelmas 1787, ſhe entered upon a houſe in George ſtreet, on the Surry ſide of Black Friar's Bridge. The three years immediately enſuing, may be ſaid, in the ordinary acceptation of the term, to have been the moſt active part of her life. She brought with her to this habitation, the novel of Mary, which had not yet been ſent to the

the preſs, and the commencement of a ſort of oriental tale, entitled, the Cave of Fancy, which ſhe thought proper afterwards to lay aſide unfiniſhed. I am told that at this period ſhe appeared under great dejection of ſpirits, and filled with melancholy regret for the loſs of her youthful friend. A period of two years had elapſed ſince the death of that friend; but it was poſſibly the compoſition of the fiction of Mary, that renewed her ſorrows in their original force. Soon after entering upon her new habitation, ſhe produced a little work, entitled, Original Stories from Real Life, intended for the uſe of children. At the commencement of her literary career, ſhe is ſaid to have conceived a vehement averſion to the being regarded, by her ordinary acquaintance, in the character

ter of an author, and to have employed ſome precautions to prevent its occurrence.

The employment which the bookſeller ſuggeſted to her, as the eaſieſt and moſt certain ſource of pecuniary income, was tranſlation. With this view ſhe improved herſelf in her French, with which ſhe had previouſly but a ſlight acquaintance, and acquired the Italian and German languages. The greater part of her literary engagements at this time, were ſuch as were preſented to her by Mr. Johnſon. She new-modelled and abridged a work, tranſlated from the Dutch, entitled, Young Grandiſon: ſhe began a tranſlation from the French, of a book called the New Robinſon; but in this undertaking ſhe was, I believe, anticipated by another tranſ-

lator: and ſhe compiled a ſeries of extracts in verſe and proſe, upon the model of Dr. Enfield's Speaker, which bears the title of the Female Reader; but which, from a cauſe not worth mentioning, has hitherto been printed with a different name in the title-page.

About the middle of the year 1788, Mr. Johnſon inſtituted the Analytical Review, in which Mary took a conſiderable ſhare. She alſo tranſlated Necker on the Importance of Religious Opinions; made an abridgment of Lavater's Phyſiognomy, from the French, which has never been publiſhed; and compreſſed Salzmann's Elements of Morality, a German production, into a publication in three volumes duodecimo. The tranſlation of Salzmann produced a correſpondence between Mary and the author; and

and he afterwards repaid the obligation to her in kind, by a German tranſlation of the Rights of Woman. Such were her principal literary occupations, from the autumn of 1787, to the autumn of 1790.

It perhaps deſerves to be remarked that this ſort of miſcellaneous literary employment, ſeems, for the time at leaſt, rather to damp and contract, than to enlarge and invigorate, the genius. The writer is accuſtomed to ſee his performances anſwer the merely mercantile purpoſe of the day, and confounded with thoſe of perſons to whom he is ſecretly conſcious of a ſuperiority. No neighbour mind ſerves as a mirror to reflect the generous confidence he felt in himſelf; and perhaps the man never yet exiſted, who could maintain his enthuſiaſm to its full

vigour, in the midſt of this kind of ſolitarineſs. He is touched with the torpedo of mediocrity. I believe that nothing which Mary produced during this period, is marked with thoſe daring flights, which exhibit themſelves in the little fiction ſhe compoſed juſt before its commencement. Interſperſed among occaſional traits of an original mind, I find a portion of that homily-language, which, to ſpeak my own feelings, is calculated to damp the moral courage, it was intended to awaken. This is probably to be aſſigned to the cauſes above deſcribed.

I have already ſaid that one of the purpoſes which Mary had conceived, a few years before, as neceſſary to give reliſh to the otherwiſe inſipid, or embittered, draught of human life, was

was uſefulneſs. On this ſide, the period of her exiſtence of which I am now treating, is more brilliant, than in a literary view. She determined to apply as great a part as poſſible of the produce of her preſent employments, to the aſſiſtance of her friends and of the diſtreſſed; and, for this purpoſe, laid down to herſelf rules of the moſt rigid economy. She began with endeavouring to promote the intereſt of her ſiſters. She conceived that there was no ſituation in which ſhe could place them, at once ſo reſpectable and agreeable, as that of governeſſes in private families. She determined therefore in the firſt place, to endeavour to qualify them for ſuch an undertaking. Her younger ſiſter ſhe ſent to Paris, where ſhe remained near two years. The elder ſhe placed in

a ſchool near London, firſt as a parlour-boarder, and afterwards as a teacher. Her brother James, who had already been at ſea, ſhe firſt took into her houſe, and next ſent to Woolwich for inſtruction, to qualify him for a reſpectable ſituation in the royal navy, where he was ſhortly after made a lieutenant. Charles, who was her favourite brother, had been articled to the eldeſt, an attorney in the Minories; but not being ſatisfied with his ſituation, ſhe effected a transfer of his indentures to another attorney, and in ſome time after, having firſt placed him with a farmer for inſtruction, ſhe fitted him out for America, where his ſpeculations, founded upon the preparation thus beſtowed on him, are ſaid to have been extremely proſperous. The reaſon ſo much of this parental care fell upon her,

her, is to be traced to the embarraſſed circumſtances of her father. His affairs having ſome time before grown too complex for himſelf to diſentangle, he had entruſted them to the management of a near relation; but, as they did not appear to benefit from the ſuperintendence of their new manager, Mary about this time took them into her own hands. The exertions ſhe made, and the ſtruggle into which ſhe entered however, in this inſtance, were ultimately fruitleſs. To the day of her death her father was almoſt wholly ſupported by funds with which ſhe ſupplied him. In addition to her exertions for her own family, ſhe took a young girl of about ſeven years of age under her protection and care, the niece of Mrs. John Hunter, and of the preſent Mrs. Skeys, for whoſe mother, then lately dead, ſhe had entertained a ſincere friendſhip.

The period, from the end of the year 1787 to the end of the year 1790, though conſumed in labours of little eclat, ſerved ſtill further to eſtabliſh her in a friendly connection from which ſhe derived many pleaſures. Mr. Johnſon, the bookſeller, contracted a great perſonal regard for her, which reſembled in many reſpects that of a parent. As ſhe frequented his houſe, ſhe of courſe became acquainted with his gueſts. Among theſe may be mentioned as perſons poſſeſſing her eſteem, Mr. Bonnycaſtle, the mathematician, the late Mr. George Anderſon, accountant to the board of control, Dr. George Fordyce, and Mr. Fuſeli, the celebrated painter. Between both of the two latter and herſelf, there exiſted ſentiments of genuine affection and friendſhip.

CHAP.

CHAP. VI.

1790—1792.

HITHERTO the literary career of Mary had, for the moſt part, been ſilent; and had been productive of income to herſelf, without apparently leading to fame. From this time ſhe was deſtined to attract the notice of the public, and perhaps no female writer ever obtained ſo great a degree of celebrity throughout Europe.

It cannot be doubted that, while, for three years of literary employment, ſhe "held the noiſeleſs tenor of her way," her mind was inſenſibly advanc-

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ing towards a vigorous maturity. The uninterrupted habit of compoſition gave a freedom and firmneſs to the expreſſion of her ſentiments. The ſociety ſhe frequented, nouriſhed her underſtanding, and enlarged her mind. The French revolution, while it gave a ſhock to the human intellect through every region of the globe, did not fail to produce a conſpicuous effect in the progreſs of Mary's reflections. The prejudices of her early years ſuffered a vehement concuſſion. Her reſpect for eſtabliſhments was undermined. At this period occurred a miſunderſtanding upon public grounds, with one of her early friends, whoſe attachment to muſty creeds and exploded abſurdities, had been increaſed, by the operation of thoſe very circumſtances, by which her mind had been

been rapidly advanced in the race of independence.

The event, immediately introductory to the rank which from this time ſhe held in literature, was the publication of Burke's Reflections on the Revolution in France. This book, after having been long promiſed to the world, finally made its appearance on the firſt of November 1790; and Mary, full of ſentiments of liberty, and impreſſed with a warm intereſt in the ſtruggle that was now going on, ſeized her pen in the firſt burſt of indignation, an emotion of which ſhe was ſtrongly ſuſceptible. She was in the habit of compoſing with rapidity, and her anſwer, which was nearly the firſt of the numerous ones that appeared, obtained extraordinary notice. Marked as it is with the vehemence and impetu-

ouſneſs

ouſneſs of its eloquence, it is certainly chargeable with a too contemptuous and intemperate treatment of the great man againſt whom its attack is directed. But this circumſtance was not injurious to the ſucceſs of the publication. Burke had been warmly loved by the moſt liberal and enlightened friends of freedom, and they were proportionably inflamed and diſguſted by the fury of his aſſault, upon what they deemed to be its ſacred cauſe.

Short as was the time in which Mary compoſed her Anſwer to Burke's Reflections, there was one circumſtance that occurred while it was under her hands, which ſeems worth recording in this place. It was ſent to the preſs, as is a frequent practice when the early publication of a piece is deemed important, before the compoſition

compoſition was finiſhed. When Mary had arrived at about the middle of her work, ſhe was ſeized with a temporary fit of torpor and indolence, and began to repent of her undertaking. In this ſtate of mind, ſhe called one evening, as ſhe was in the practice of doing, upon her publiſher, for the purpoſe of relieving herſelf by an hour or two's converſation. Here, the habitual ingenuouſneſs of her nature, led her to deſcribe what had juſt paſt in her thoughts. Mr. Johnſon immediately, in a kind and friendly way, intreated her not to put any conſtraint upon her inclination, and to give herſelf no uneaſineſs about the ſheets already printed, which he would cheerfully throw aſide, if it would contribute to her happineſs. Mary had wanted incentive. She had expect-

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ed reproach, rather than to be encouraged, in what ſhe well knew to be unreaſonable. Mr. Johnſon's ſo readily falling in with her ill-humour, and ſeeming to expect that ſhe would lay aſide her undertaking, piqued her pride. She immediately went home; and proceeded to the end of her work, with no other interruptions but what were abſolutely indiſpenſible.

It is probable that the applauſe which attended her Anſwer to Burke, elevated the tone of her mind. She had always felt much confidence in her own powers; but it cannot be doubted, that the actual perception of a ſimilar feeling reſpecting us in a multitude of others, muſt increaſe the confidence, and ſtimulate the adventure of any human being. Mary accordingly proceeded, in a ſhort time after,

after, to the compoſition of her moſt celebrated production, the Vindication of the Rights of Woman.

Never did any author enter into a cauſe, with a more ardent deſire to be found, not a flouriſhing and empty declaimer, but an effectual champion. She conſidered herſelf as ſtanding forth in defence of one half of the human ſpecies, labouring under a yoke which, through all the records of time, had degraded them from the ſtation of rational beings, and almoſt ſunk them to the level of the brutes. She ſaw indeed, that they were often attempted to be held in ſilken fetters, and bribed into the love of ſlavery, but the diſguiſe and the treachery ſerved only the more fully to confirm her oppoſition. She regarded her ſex, in the language of Caliſta, as

"Through every ſtate of life the ſlaves of man:"

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the rich as alternately under the deſpotiſm of a father, a brother, and a huſband; and the middling and the poorer claſſes ſhut out from the acquiſition of bread with independence, when they are not ſhut out from the very means of an induſtrious ſubſiſtence. Such were the views ſhe entertained of the ſubject; and ſuch the feelings with which ſhe warmed her mind.

The work is certainly a very bold and original production. The ſtrength and firmneſs with which the author repels the opinions of Rouſſeau, Dr. Gregory, and Dr. James Fordyce, reſpecting the condition of women, cannot but make a ſtrong impreſſion upon every ingenuous reader. The public at large formed very different opinions reſpecting the character of the performance.

performance. Many of the ſentiments are undoubtedly of a rather maſculine deſcription. The ſpirited and deciſive way in which the author explodes the ſyſtem of gallantry, and the ſpecies of homage with which the ſex is uſually treated, ſhocked the majority. Novelty produced a ſentiment in their mind, which they miſtook for a ſenſe of injuſtice. The pretty, ſoft creatures that are ſo often to be found in the female ſex, and that claſs of men who believe they could not exiſt without ſuch pretty, ſoft creatures to reſort to, were in arms againſt the author of ſo heretical and blaſphemous a doctrine. There are alſo, it muſt be confeſſed, occaſional paſſages of a ſtern and rugged feature, incompatible with the writer's eſſential character. But, if they did not

belong to her fixed and permanent character, they belonged to her character of the moment; and what ſhe thought, ſhe ſcorned to qualify.

Yet, along with this rigid, and ſomewhat amazonian temper, which characteriſed ſome parts of the book, it is impoſſible not to remark a luxuriance of imagination, and a trembling delicacy of ſentiment, which would have done honour to a poet, burning with all the viſions of an Armida and a Dido.

The preconceived ideas of the public were not leſs erroneous as to the perſon of the author, than thoſe they had formed of the temper of the book. In the champion of her ſex, who was deſcribed as endeavouring to inveſt them with all the rights of man, thoſe whom curioſity led to ſeek

ſeek an opportunity of ſeeing her, expected to find a rude, pedantic, dictatorial virago; and they were not a little ſurpriſed when, inſtead of all this, they found a woman, lovely in her perſon, and, in the beſt and moſt engaging ſenſe, feminine in her manners.

The Vindication of the Rights of Woman is a very unequal perfomance, and eminently deficient in method and arrangement. When tried by the hoary and long-eſtabliſhed laws of literary compoſition, it can ſcarcely maintain its claim to be placed in the claſs of finiſhed productions. But, when we conſider the importance of its doctrines, and the eminence of genius it diſplays, it ſeems not very improbable that it will be read as long as the Engliſh language endures. The publication of this book forms an epocha in

the ſubject to which it belongs; and Mary Wollſtonecraft will perhaps hereafter be found to have performed more ſubſtantial ſervice for the cauſe of her ſex, than all the other writers, male or female, that ever felt themſelves animated by the contemplation of their oppreſſed and injured ſtate.

The cenſure of the liberal critic as to the defects of this performance, will be changed into aſtoniſhment, when I tell him, that a work of this ineſtimable moment, was begun, carried on, and finiſhed in the ſtate in which it now appears, in a period of no more than ſix weeks.

The remainder of the ſtory I have to relate is leſs literary, than perſonal. For the reſt of her life Mary was continually occupied by a train of circumſtances, which rouſed all the prepoſſeſſions and paſſions of her mind.

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It is neceſſary here that I ſhould reſume the ſubject of the friendſhip that ſubſiſted between Mary and Mr. Fuſeli. He is a native of the Union of Switzerland, but has ſpent the principal part of his life in the iſland of Great-Britain. The eminence of his genius can ſcarcely be diſputed; it has indeed received the teſtimony which is the leaſt to be ſuſpected, that of ſome of the moſt conſiderable of his contemporary artiſts. He has one of the moſt ſtriking characteriſtics of genius, a daring, as well as perſevering, ſpirit of adventure. The work in which he is at preſent engaged, a ſeries of pictures for the illuſtration of Milton, upon a very large ſcale, and undertaken ſolely from the inſtigation of his own mind, is a proof of this, if indeed his whole life had not ſufficiently proved it.

Mr. Fuſeli is one of Mr. Johnſon's oldeſt friends, and was at this time in the habit of viſiting him two or three times a week. Mary, one of whoſe ſtrongeſt characteriſtics was the exquiſite ſenſations of pleaſure ſhe felt from the aſſociations of viſible objects, had hitherto never been acquainted, or never intimately acquainted, with an eminent painter. The being thus introduced therefore to the ſociety of Mr. Fuſeli, was a high gratification to her; while he found in Mary, a perſon perhaps more ſuſceptible of the emotions painting is calculated to excite, than any other with whom he ever converſed. Painting, and ſubjects cloſely connected with painting, were their almoſt conſtant topics of converſation; and they found them inexhauſtible. It

cannot

cannot be doubted, that this was a ſpecies of exerciſe very conducive to the improvement of Mary's mind.

Nothing human however is unmixed. If Mary derived improvement from Mr. Fuſeli, ſhe may alſo be ſuſpected of having caught the infection of ſome of his faults. In early life Mr. Fuſeli was ardently attached to literature; but the demands of his profeſſion have prevented him from keeping up that extenſive and indiſcriminate acquaintance with it, that miſcellaneous ſcholars frequently poſſeſs. When I ſay this, it is by no means intended to imply, that his intercourſe with the writers of eſtabliſhed fame is not conſiderable, or that he is not profoundly ſkilled in their beauties. One conſequence however of his avo-

cations from literature is, that the favourites of his boyiſh years remain his only favourites. Homer is with Mr. Fuſeli the abſtract and depoſit of every human perfection. The neareſt rival of Homer, if Homer can have a rival, is Jean Jacques Rouſſeau. A young man embraces entire the opinions of a favourite writer, and Mr. Fuſeli has not had leiſure to bring the opinions of his youth to a reviſion. Smitten with Rouſſeau's conception of the perfectneſs of the ſavage ſtate, and the eſſential futility of all civilization, Mr. Fuſeli looks at our little attempts at improvement, with a ſpirit that borders perhaps too much upon contempt and indifference. One of his favourite poſitions is the divinity of genius. This is a power that comes

comes complete at once from the hands of the Creator of all things, and the firſt eſſays of a man of real genius are ſuch, in all their grand and moſt important features, as no ſubſequent aſſiduity can mend. Add to this, that Mr. Fuſeli is ſomewhat of a cauſtic turn of mind, with much wit, and a diſpoſition to ſearch, in every thing new or modern, for occaſions of cenſure. I believe Mary came ſomething more a cynic out of the ſchool of Mr. Fuſeli, than ſhe went into it.

But the principal circumſtance that relates to the intercourſe of Mary, and this celebrated artiſt, remains to be told. She ſaw Mr. Fuſeli frequently; he amuſed, delighted and inſtructed her. As a painter, it was impoſſible ſhe ſhould not wiſh to ſee his works, and conſequently to frequent his

his houſe. She viſited him; her viſits were returned. Notwithſtanding the inequality of their years, Mary was not of a temper to live upon terms of ſo much intimacy with a man of merit and genius, without loving him. The delight ſhe enjoyed in his ſociety, ſhe transferred by aſſociation to his perſon.

To underſtand this, we have only to recollect how dear to perſons of ſenſibility is the exerciſe of the affections. A ſound morality requires that "nothing human ſhould be regarded by us with indifference;" but it is impoſſible that we ſhould not feel the ſtrongeſt intereſt for thoſe perſons, whom we know moſt intimately, and whoſe welfare and ſympathies, are united to our own. True wiſdom will recommend to us individual attachments; for with them our minds are more

more thoroughly maintained in activity and life than they can be under the privation of them, and it is better that man ſhould be a living being, than a ſtock or a ſtone. True virtue will ſanction this recommendation, ſince it is the object of virtue to produce happineſs, and ſince the man who lives in the midſt of domeſtic relations, will have many opportunities of conferring pleaſure, minute in the detail, yet not trivial in the amount, without interfering with the purpoſes of general benevolence. Nay, by kindling his ſenſibility, and harmonizing his ſoul, they may be expected, if he is endowed with a liberal and manly ſpirit, to render him more prompt in the ſervice of ſtrangers and of the public.

But, in the catalogue of domeſtic charities, there are none ſo capable of affording

affording ſtrong and permanent delight, as that of two perſons of oppoſite ſexes who have conceived a preference for each other. Human beings differ ſo much in their tempers and views, that, except in caſes of a tender attachment, cohabitation brings with it ſmall proſpect of harmony and of happineſs. The connection between parents and children, between grown perſons and young, is of too unequal a nature; and is bounded and reſtrained by a ſenſe of reſponſibility on the one ſide, and the inattention and heedleſſneſs particularly incident to the other. The charm of domeſtic life conſiſts in a mutual deſire to ſtudy each other's gratification; and this can ſcarcely ſubſiſt in ſufficient force, but in this particular connection.

Mary had now lived for upwards of thirty

thirty years in a ſtate of celibacy and ſecluſion. As her ſenſibilities were exquiſitely acute, ſhe had felt this ſort of baniſhment from ſocial charities, ſo frequent in a ſtate of high civiliſation and refinement, more painfully than perſons in general are likely to feel it. Or rather, as I believe, ſhe ſuffered occaſional acceſſes of uneaſineſs, torpor, and vacuity, without having clearly traced the ſources and remedy of the evil. She was like what we are told of thoſe lofty and aſpiring geniuſes, who, being formed for buſy ſcenes and daring projects, find the activity of their temper, when debarred its proper field, corroding and preying upon itſelf. The ſentiments which Mr. Fuſeli excited in her mind, taught her the ſecret, to which ſhe was ſo long in a manner a ſtranger.

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Let it not however be imagined, that this was any other than the dictate of a moſt refined ſentiment, and the ſimple deduction of morality and reaſon. Never was there a woman on the face of the earth more alien to that mire and groſſneſs, in which the ſenſual part of our ſpecies are delighted to wallow. Superior at the ſame time to the idleneſs of romance, and the pretence of an ideal philoſophy, no one knew more perfectly how to aſſign to the enjoyments of affection their reſpective rank, or to maintain in virgin and unſullied purity the chaſteneſs of her mind.

It happened in the preſent caſe that Mr. Fuſeli was already married; and, in viſiting at his houſe, his wife became the acquaintance of Mary. Mary did not diſguiſe from herſelf how deſirable it

it would have been, that the man in whom ſhe diſcovered qualities calling forth all the ſtrength of her attachment, ſhould have been equally free with herſelf. But ſhe chearfully ſubmitted to the empire of circumſtances. She conceived it practicable to cultivate a diſtinguiſhing affection, and to foſter it by the endearments of perſonal intercourſe and a reciprocation of kindneſs, without departing from the conſideration due to his previous engagements. She ſcorned to ſuppoſe, that ſhe could feel a ſtruggle, in conforming to the laws ſhe ſhould lay down to her conduct.

In September 1791, ſhe removed from the houſe ſhe occupied in George-ſtreet, to a commodious apartment in Store-ſtreet, Bedford-ſquare. She began to think that ſhe had been too rigid,

rigid, in the laws of frugality and ſelf-denial with which ſhe ſet out in her literary career; and now added, to the neatneſs and cleanlineſs which ſhe had always ſcrupulouſly obſerved, a certain degree of elegance, and thoſe temperate indulgences in furniture and accommodation, from which a ſound and uncorrupted taſte never fails to derive pleaſure.

It was in the month of November in the ſame year that the writer of this narrative was firſt in company with her who is the ſubject of it. He dined with her at a friend's, together with Mr. Thomas Paine and one or two other perſons. The invitation was of his own ſeeking, his object being to ſee the author of the Rights of Man, with whom he had never before converſed.

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The interview was not fortunate. Mary and myſelf parted, mutually diſpleaſed with each other. I had not read her Rights of Woman. I had barely looked into her Anſwer to Burke, and been diſpleaſed, as men of leiſure and reading are too apt to be, with a few offences againſt grammar and other minute points of compoſition. I had therefore little curioſity to ſee Mrs. Wollſtonecraft, and a great curioſity to ſee Thomas Paine. Paine, in his general habits, is no great talker; and, though he threw in occaſionally ſome ſhrewd and ſtriking remarks, the converſation lay principally between me and Mary. I, of conſequence, heard her, very frequently when I wiſhed to hear Paine.

We touched on a conſiderable variety of topics, and particularly on

the characters and habits of certain eminent men. Mary, as has already been obſerved, had acquired the practice of looking on the gloomy ſide, and beſtowing cenſure with a plentiful hand, where circumſtances were perhaps only doubtful. I, on the contrary, had a ſtrong propenſity to favourable conſtruction, and particularly, where I found unequivocal marks of genius, ſtrongly to incline to the ſuppoſition of generous and manly virtue. We diſcuſſed in this way the characters of Voltaire and others, who have obtained from ſome individuals an ardent admiration, while the greater number have treated them with extreme moral ſeverity. Mary was at laſt provoked to tell me, that praiſe, laviſhed in the way that I laviſhed it, could do no credit either to the commended

mended or the commender. We touched upon ſome queſtions on the ſubject of religion, in which her opinions approached much nearer to the received ones, than mine. As the converſation proceeded, I became diſſatisfied with the tone of my own ſhare in it. We mentioned all topics, without treating forcibly and connectedly of any. Meanwhile, I did her the juſtice, in giving an account of the converſation to a party in which I ſupped, though I was not ſparing of my blame, to yield her the praiſe of a perſon of active and independent thinking. On her ſide, ſhe did me no part of what perhaps I conſidered as juſtice.

We met two or three times in the courſe of the following year, but made a very ſmall degree of progreſs towards a cordial acquaintance.

In the cloſe of the year 1792, Mary went over to France, where ſhe continued to reſide for upwards of two years. One of her principal inducements to this ſtep, related, I believe, to Mr. Fuſeli. She had, at firſt, conſidered it as reaſonable and judicious, to cultivate what I may be permitted to call, a Platonic affection for him; but ſhe did not, in the ſequel, find all the ſatisfaction in this plan, which ſhe had originally expected from it. It was in vain that ſhe enjoyed much pleaſure in his ſociety, and that ſhe enjoyed it frequently. Her ardent imagination was continually conjuring up pictures of the happineſs ſhe would have found, if fortune had favoured their more intimate union. She felt herſelf formed for domeſtic affection, and all thoſe tender charities, which men of ſenſibility have

have conſtantly treated as the deareſt band of human ſociety. General converſation and ſociety could not ſatisfy her. She felt herſelf alone, as it were, in the great maſs of her ſpecies; and ſhe repined when ſhe reflected, that the beſt years of her life were ſpent in this comfortleſs ſolitude. Theſe ideas made the cordial intercourſe of Mr. Fuſeli, which had at firſt been one of her greateſt pleaſures, a ſource of perpetual torment to her. She conceived it neceſſary to ſnap the chain of this aſſociation in her mind; and, for that purpoſe, determined to ſeek a new climate, and mingle in different ſcenes.

It is ſingular, that during her reſidence in Store-ſtreet, which laſted more than twelve months, ſhe produced nothing, except a few articles in the Analytical Review. Her literary me-

ditations were chiefly employed upon the Sequel to the Rights of Woman; but ſhe has ſcarcely left behind her a ſingle paper, that can with certainty be aſſigned to this deſtination.

CHAP-

CHAP. VII.

1792—1795.

THE original plan of Mary, reſpecting her reſidence in France, had no preciſe limit in the article of duration; the ſingle purpoſe ſhe had in view being that of an endeavour to heal her diſtempered mind. She did not proceed ſo far as even to diſcharge her lodging in London; and, to ſome friends who ſaw her immediately before her departure, ſhe ſpoke merely of an abſence of ſix weeks.

It is not to be wondered at, that her

excurſion did not originally ſeem to produce the effects ſhe had expected from it. She was in a land of ſtrangers; ſhe had no acquaintance; ſhe had even to acquire the power of receiving and communicating ideas with facility in the language of the country. Her firſt reſidence was in a ſpacious manſion to which ſhe had been invited, but the maſter of which (monſieur Fillietaz) was abſent at the time of her arrival. At firſt therefore ſhe found herſelf ſurrounded only with ſervants. The gloom of her mind communicated its own colour to the objects ſhe ſaw; and in this temper ſhe began a ſeries of Letters on the Preſent Character of the French Nation, one of which ſhe forwarded to her publiſher, and which appears in the collection of her poſthumous works. This performance ſhe ſoon after diſcontinued; and it is, as ſhe juſtly

juſtly remarked, tinged with the ſaturnine temper which at that time pervaded her mind.

Mary carried with her introductions to ſeveral agreeable families in Paris. She renewed her acquaintance with Paine. There alſo ſubſiſted a very ſincere friendſhip between her and Helen Maria Williams, author of a collection of poems of uncommon merit, who at that time reſided in Paris. Another perſon, of whom Mary always ſpoke in terms of ardent commendation, both for the excellence of his diſpoſition, and the force of his genius, was a count Slabrendorf, by birth, I believe, a Swede. It is almoſt unneceſſary to mention, that ſhe was perſonally acquainted with the majority of the leaders in the French revolution. Her country, combined with her known political ſentiments, recommended

mended her; and the celebrity of her writings had prepared the way for her perſonal reception.

But the houſe that, I believe, ſhe principally frequented at this time, was that of Mr. Thomas Chriſtie, a perſon whoſe purſuits were mercantile, and who had written a volume on the French revolution. With Mrs. Chriſtie her intercourſe was greater than with the huſband.

It was about four months after her arrival at Paris, that ſhe entered into that connection, from which the tranquillity and the ſorrows of the immediately ſucceeding years of her life were ſolely derived. The perſon with whom it was formed (for it would be an idle piece of forbearance in this place to ſuppreſs a name, which is known to every one whom the reputation of Mary has reached),

reached), was Mr. Gilbert Imlay, native of the United States of North America.

The place at which ſhe firſt ſaw this perſon was at the houſe of Mr. Chriſtie; and it perhaps deſerves to be noticed, that the emotions he then excited in her mind, were, I am told, thoſe of diſlike, and that, for ſome time, ſhe ſhunned all occaſions of meeting him. This ſentiment however ſpeedily gave place to one of greater kindneſs.

Previouſly to the partiality ſhe conceived for Mr. Imlay, Mary had determined upon a journey to Switzerland, induced chiefly by motives of economy. But ſhe had ſome difficulty in procuring a paſſport; and it was probably the intercourſe which now occurred, that finally changed her purpoſe, and led her to prefer a lodging at Neuilly, a village three miles from Paris. Her habitation

habitation here was a ſolitary houſe in the midſt of a garden, with no other inhabitant than herſelf and the gardener, an old man, who performed for her many of the offices of a domeſtic, and would ſometimes contend for the honour of making her bed. The gardener had a great veneration for his gueſt, and would ſet before her, when alone, ſome grapes of a particularly fine ſort, which ſhe could not without the greateſt difficulty obtain of him, when ſhe had any perſon with her as a viſitor. Here it was that ſhe conceived, and for the moſt part executed, her Hiſtorical and Moral View of the French Revolution*, into which ſhe incorporated moſt of the obſervations ſhe had collected for her Letters, and

* No part of the propoſed continuation of this work, has been found among the papers of the author.

which

which was written with more ſobriety and cheerfulneſs than the tone in which they had been commenced. In the evening ſhe was accuſtomed to refreſh herſelf by a walk in a neighbouring wood, from which her hoſt in vain endeavoured to diſſuade her, by recounting divers horrible robberies and murders that had been committed there.

In the commencement of the attachment ſhe now formed, Mary had neither confident nor adviſer. Delicacy, ſhe thought, required the making an intercourſe of this ſort ſacred and confidential. The origin of the connection was about the middle of April 1793, and it was carried on in a private manner for four months. At the expiration of that period a circumſtance occurred that induced her to declare it.

The

The French convention, exaſperated at the conduct of the Britiſh government, particularly in the affair of Toulon, formed a decree againſt the citizens of this country, by one article of which the Engliſh, reſident in France, were ordered into priſon till the period of a general peace. Mary had objected to a marriage with Mr. Imlay, who, at the time their connection was formed, had no property whatever; becauſe ſhe would not involve him in certain family embarraſſments to which ſhe conceived herſelf expoſed, or make him anſwerable for the pecuniary demands that exiſted againſt her. She however conſidered their engagement as of the moſt inviolable nature; and they had mutually formed the plan of emigrating to America, as ſoon as they ſhould have realized a ſum, enabling

abling them to do it in the mode they desired. Meanwhile the decree that I have just mentioned, made it necessary, not that a marriage should actually take place, but that Mary should take the name of Imlay, which, from the nature of their connection (formed, on her part at least, with no capricious or fickle design), she conceived herself entitled to do, and obtain a certificate from the American ambassador, as the wife of a native of that country.

Their engagement being thus avowed, they thought proper to reside under the same roof, and for that purpose removed to Paris.

Mary now thought herself arrived at the situation, which, for two or three preceding years, her reason had pointed out to her as affording the most substantial prospect of happiness. She had

had been toſſed and agitated by the waves of misfortune. Her childhood, as ſhe often ſaid, had known few of the endearments, which conſtitute the principal happineſs of childhood. The temper of her father had early given to her mind a ſevere caſt of thought, and ſubſtituted the inflexibility of reſiſtance for the confidence of affection. The cheerfulneſs of her entrance upon womanhood, had been darkened, by an attendance upon the death-bed of her mother, and the afflicting calamity of her eldeſt ſiſter. Her exertions to create a joint independence for her ſiſters and herſelf, had been attended, neither with the ſucceſs, nor the pleaſure, ſhe had hoped from them. Her firſt youthful paſſion, her friendſhip for Fanny, had encountered many diſappointments,

and

and, in fine, a melancholy and premature cataſtrophe. Soon after theſe accumulated mortifications, ſhe was engaged in a conteſt with a near relation, whom ſhe regarded as unprincipled, reſpecting the wreck of her father's fortune. In this affair ſhe ſuffered the double pain, which ariſes from moral indignation, and diſappointed benevolence. Her exertions to aſſiſt almoſt every member of her family, were great and unremitted. Finally, when ſhe indulged a romantic affection for Mr. Fuſeli, and fondly imagined that ſhe ſhould find in it the ſolace of her cares, ſhe perceived too late, that, by continually impreſſing on her mind fruitleſs images of unreſerved affection and domeſtic felicity, it only ſerved to give new pungency to the ſenſibility that was deſtroying her.

Some perſons may be inclined to obſerve, that the evils here enumerated, are not among the heavieſt in the catalogue of human calamities. But evils take their rank leſs from their own nature, than from the temper of the mind that ſuffers them. Upon a man of a hard and inſenſible diſpoſition, the ſhafts of misfortune fall pointleſs and impotent. There are perſons, by no means hard and inſenſible, who, from an elaſtic and ſanguine turn of mind, are continually prompted to look on the fair ſide of things, and, having ſuffered one fall, immediately riſe again, to purſue their courſe with the ſame eagerneſs, the ſame hope and gaiety, as before. On the other hand, we not unfrequently meet with perſons, endowed with the moſt exquiſite and refined ſenſibility, whoſe minds ſeem almoſt of too delicate

cate a texture to encounter the viciſſitudes of human affairs, to whom pleaſure is tranſport, and diſappointment is agony indeſcribable. This character is finely pourtrayed by the author of the Sorrows of Werter. Mary was in this reſpect a female Werter.

She brought then, in the preſent inſtance, a wounded and ſick heart, to take refuge in the attachment of a choſen friend. Let it not however be imagined, that ſhe brought a heart, querulous, and ruined in its taſte for pleaſure. No; her whole character ſeemed to change with a change of fortune. Her ſorrows, the depreſſion of her ſpirits, were forgotten, and ſhe aſſumed all the ſimplicity and the vivacity of a youthful mind. She was playful, full of confidence, kindneſs and ſympathy. Her eyes aſſumed new luſtre,

and her cheeks new colour and ſmoothneſs. Her voice became chearful; her temper overflowing with univerſal kindneſs; and that ſmile of bewitching tenderneſs from day to day illuminated her countenance, which all who knew her will ſo well recollect, and which won, both heart and ſoul, the affection of almoſt every one that beheld it.

Mary now repoſed herſelf upon a perſon, of whoſe honour and principles ſhe had the moſt exalted idea. She nouriſhed an affection, which ſhe ſaw no neceſſity of ſubjecting to reſtraint; and a heart like her's was not formed to nouriſh affection by halves. Her confidence was entire. Now, for the firſt time in her life, ſhe gave a looſe to all the ſenſibilities of her nature.

It

It might be conſidered as a trite remark, if I were to obſerve here, that the higheſt pleaſures of human life are nearly connected with its bittereſt ſorrows, and that the being who reſtleſsly aſpires to ſuperior gratifications, has ſome reaſon to fear, leſt his refinement ſhould be a precurſor to anguiſh and repentance. Influenced by this anticipation, there are perſons who reſolutely circumſcribe themſelves within the ſphere of a frigid and miſerable ſeparation from others, that they may be independent of their injuſtice or folly. But this is a ſordid policy. The miſtake of Mary in this inſtance is eaſy of detection. She did not give full play to her judgment in this moſt important choice of life. She was too much under the influence of the melancholy and diſappoint-

ment which had driven her from her native land; and, gratified with the firſt gleam of promiſed relief, ſhe ventured not to examine with too curious a reſearch into the ſoundneſs of her expectation. The leaſt that can be ſaid of the connection that ſhe now formed, is, that it was a very unequal one. In years the parties were a match for each other; in every other point they were ill fitted for ſo entire an intimacy.

Soon after the time to which my narrative has reached, the attachment of Mary gained a new link, by her finding reaſon to ſuppoſe herſelf with child.

The eſtabliſhment ſhe had formed at Paris, was however broken almoſt as ſoon as entered on, by the circumſtance of Mr. Imlay's engaging in buſineſs, urged, as he ſaid, by the proſpect of a family,

family, and this being a favourable criſis in French affairs for commercial ſpeculations. The purſuits into which he entered, led him in the month of September to Havre de Grace, then called Havre Marat, probably to ſuperintend the ſhipping of goods, in which he was jointly engaged with ſome other perſon or perſons. Mary remained in the capital.

The ſolitude in which ſhe was now left, proved an unexpected trial. Domeſtic affections conſtituted the object upon which her heart was fixed; and ſhe early felt, with an inward grief, that Mr. Imlay "did not attach thoſe tender emotions round the idea of home, which, every time they recurred, dimmed her eyes with moiſture." She had expected his return from week to week, and from month

to month; but a ſucceſſion of buſineſs ſtill continued to detain him at Havre. At the ſame time the ſanguinary character which the government of France began every day more deciſively to aſſume, contributed to baniſh tranquillity from the firſt months of her pregnancy. Before ſhe left Neuilly, ſhe happened one day to enter Paris on foot (I believe, by the *Place de Louis Quinze*), when an execution, attended with ſome peculiar aggravations, had juſt taken place, and the blood from the guillotine appeared freſh upon the pavement. The emotions of her ſoul burſt forth in indignant exclamations, while a prudent byſtander warned her of her danger, and intreated her to haſten and hide her diſcontents. She deſcribed to me, more than once, the anguiſh ſhe felt at hearing of the death of

of Briſſot, Vergniaud, and the twenty deputies, as one of the moſt intolerable ſenſations ſhe had ever experienced.

Finding the return of Mr. Imlay continually poſtponed, ſhe determined, in January 1794, to join him at Havre. One motive that influenced her, though, I believe, by no means the principal, was the growing cruelties of Robeſpierre, and the deſire ſhe felt to be in any other place, rather than the devoted city, in the midſt of which they were perpetrated.

From January to September, Mr. Imlay and Mary lived together, with great harmony, at Havre, where the child, with which ſhe was pregnant, was born, on the fourteenth of May, and named Frances, in remembrance of the dear friend of her youth, whoſe image

image could never be eraſed from her memory.

In September, Mr. Imlay took his departure from Havre for the port of London. As this ſtep was ſaid to be neceſſary in the way of buſineſs, he endeavoured to prevail upon Mary to quit Havre, and once more take up her abode at Paris. Robeſpierre was now no more, and, of conſequence, the only objection ſhe had to reſiding in the capital, was removed. Mr. Imlay was already in London, before ſhe undertook her journey, and it proved the moſt fatiguing ſhe ever made; the carriage, in which ſhe travelled, being overturned no leſs than four times between Havre and Paris.

This abſence, like that of the preceding year in which Mr. Imlay had removed to Havre, was repreſented by him

him as an abſence that was to have a ſhort duration. In two months he was again to join her at Paris. It proved however the prelude to an eternal ſeparation. The agonies of ſuch a ſeparation, or rather deſertion, great as Mary would have found them upon every ſuppoſition, were vaſtly increaſed, by the lingering method in which it was effected, and the ambiguity that, for a long time, hung upon it. This circumſtance produced the effect, of holding her mind, by force, as it were, to the moſt painful of all ſubjects, and not ſuffering her to derive the juſt advantage from the energy and elaſticity of her character.

The procraſtination of which I am ſpeaking was however productive of one advantage. It put off the evil day. She did not ſuſpect the calamities that awaited

awaited her, till the close of the year. She gained an additional three months of comparative happiness. But she purchased it at a very dear rate. Perhaps no human creature ever suffered greater misery, than dyed the whole year 1795, in the life of this incomparable woman. It was wasted in that sort of despair, to the sense of which the mind is continually awakened, by a glimmering of fondly cherished, expiring hope.

Why did she thus obstinately cling to a passion, at once ill-assorted, and unpromising? Because it is of the very essence of affection, to seek to perpetuate itself. He does not love, who can resign this cherished sentiment, without suffering some of the sharpest struggles that our nature is capable of enduring. Add to this, Mary had fixed her heart upon this chosen friend; and one

one of the laſt impreſſions a worthy mind can ſubmit to receive, is that of the worthleſſneſs of the perſon upon whom it has placed its eſteem. Mary had ſtruggled to entertain a favourable opinion of human nature; ſhe had unweariedly ſought for a kindred mind, in whoſe integrity and fidelity to take up her reſt. Wounded affection, wounded pride, all thoſe principles which hold moſt abſolute empire in the pureſt and loftieſt minds, urged her to ſtill further experiments to recover her influence, and to a ſtill more poignant deſperation, long after reaſon would have directed her to deſiſt, and reſolutely call off her mind from thoughts of ſo hopeleſs and fatal a deſcription. Mr. Imlay undertook to prove, in his letters written immediately after their complete ſeparation, that his conduct towards her was

was reconcileable to the ſtricteſt rectitude; but undoubtedly Mary was of a different opinion. Whatever the reader may decide in this reſpect, there is one ſentiment that, I believe, he will unheſitatingly admit: that of pity for the miſtake of the man, who, being in poſſeſſion of ſuch a friendſhip and attachment as thoſe of Mary, could hold them at a trivial price, and, "like the baſe Indian, throw a pearl away, richer than all his tribe.*"

* A perſon, whom Mary ſaw frequently about this time, was Archibald Hamilton Rowan, who had lately become a fugitive from Ireland, in conſequence of a political proſecution, and in whom ſhe found thoſe qualities which were always eminently engaging to her, great integrity of diſpoſition, and great kindneſs of heart.

CHAP.

CHAP. VIII.

1795, 1796.

IN April 1795, Mary returned once more to London, being requeſted to do ſo by Mr. Imlay, who even ſent a ſervant to Paris to wait upon her in the journey, before ſhe could complete the neceſſary arrangements for her departure. But, notwithſtanding theſe favourable appearances, ſhe came to England with a heavy heart, not daring, after all the uncertainties and anguiſh ſhe had endured, to truſt to the ſuggeſtions of hope.

The

The gloomy forebodings of her mind, were but too faithfully verified. Mr. Imlay had already formed another connection; as it is ſaid, with a young actreſs from a ſtrolling company of players. His attentions therefore to Mary were formal and conſtrained, and ſhe probably had but little of his ſociety. This alteration could not eſcape her. He aſcribed it to preſſure of buſineſs, and ſome pecuniary embarraſſments which, at that time, preſſed upon him; it was of little conſequence to Mary what was the cauſe. She ſaw but too well, though ſhe ſtrove not to ſee, that his affections were loſt to her for ever.

It is impoſſible to imagine a period of greater pain and mortification than Mary paſſed, for about ſeven weeks, from the ſixteenth of April to the ſixth of

of June, in a furniſhed houſe that Mr. Imlay had provided for her. She had come over to England, a country to which ſhe, at this time, expreſſed "a repugnance, that almoſt amounted to horror," in ſearch of happineſs. She feared that that happineſs had altogether eſcaped her; but ſhe was encouraged by the eagerneſs and impatience which Mr. Imlay at length ſeemed to manifeſt for her arrival. When ſhe ſaw him, all her fears were confirmed. What a picture was ſhe capable of forming to herſelf, of the overflowing kindneſs of a meeting, after an interval of ſo much anguiſh and apprehenſion! A thouſand images of this ſort were preſent to her burning imagination. It is in vain, on ſuch occaſions, for reſerve and reproach to endeavour to curb the emotions of an affectionate

heart. But the hopes ſhe nouriſhed were ſpeedily blaſted. Her reception by Mr. Imlay, was cold and embarraſſed. Diſcuſſions ("explanations" they were called) followed; cruel explanations, that only added to the anguiſh of a heart already overwhelmed in grief! They had ſmall pretenſions indeed to explicitneſs; but they ſufficiently told, that the caſe admitted not a remedy.

Mary was incapable of ſuſtaining her equanimity in this preſſing emergency. "Love, dear, deluſive love!" as ſhe expreſſed herſelf to a friend ſome time afterwards, "rigorous reaſon had forced her to reſign; and now her rational proſpects were blaſted, juſt as ſhe had learned to be contented with rational enjoyments." Thus ſituated, life became an intolerable burthen.

While

While she was absent from Mr. Imlay, she could talk of purposes of separation and independence. But, now that they were in the same house, she could not withhold herself from endeavours to revive their mutual cordiality; and unsuccessful endeavours continually added fuel to the fire that destroyed her. She formed a desperate purpose to die.

This part of the story of Mary is involved in considerable obscurity. I only know, that Mr. Imlay became acquainted with her purpose, at a moment when he was uncertain whether it was already executed, and that his feelings were roused by the intelligence. It was perhaps owing to his activity and representations, that her life was, at this time, saved. She determined to continue to live. Actuated by this purpose, she took a resolu-

tion, worthy both of the ſtrength and affectionateneſs of her mind. Mr. Imlay was involved in a queſtion of conſiderable difficulty, reſpecting a mercantile adventure in Norway. It ſeemed to require the preſence of ſome particularly judicious agent, to conduct the buſineſs to its deſired termination. Mary determined to make the voyage, and take the buſineſs into her own hands. Such a voyage ſeemed well calculated to recruit her health, and, if poſſible, her ſpirits, in the preſent criſis. It was alſo gratifying to her feelings, to be employed in promoting the intereſt of a man, from whom ſhe had experienced ſuch ſevere unkindneſs, but to whom ſhe ardently deſired to be reconciled. The moment of deſperation I have mentioned, occurred in the cloſe of May, and, in about a week after, ſhe

ſhe ſet out upon this new expedition.

The narrative of this voyage is before the world, and perhaps a book of travels that ſo irreſiſtibly ſeizes on the heart, never, in any other inſtance, found its way from the preſs. The occaſional harſhneſs and ruggedneſs of character, that diverſify her Vindication of the Rights of Woman, here totally diſappear. If ever there was a book calculated to make a man in love with its author, this appears to me to be the book. She ſpeaks of her ſorrows, in a way that fills us with melancholy, and diſſolves us in tenderneſs, at the ſame time that ſhe diſplays a genius which commands all our admiration.

Thus awakened and improved, thus fraught with imagination and ſenſibility, ſhe returned to England. Her re-

turn was haſtened by the ambiguity, to her apprehenſion, of Mr. Imlay's conduct. He had promiſed to meet her upon her journey home, probably at Hamburgh; and they were then to paſs ſome time in Switzerland. The ſtyle however of his letters to her during her tour, was not ſuch as to inſpire confidence; and ſhe wrote to him very urgently, to explain himſelf, relative to the footing upon which they were hereafter to ſtand to each other. In his anſwer, which reached her at Hamburgh, he treated her queſtions as "extraordinary and unneceſſary," and deſired her to be at the pains to decide for herſelf. Feeling herſelf unable to accept this as an explanation, ſhe inſtantly determined to ſail for London by the very firſt opportunity, that ſhe might thus bring to a termination the

the ſuſpence that preyed upon her ſoul.

It was not long after her arrival in London in the commencement of October, that ſhe attained the certainty ſhe ſought. Mr. Imlay procured her a lodging. But the neglect ſhe experienced from him after ſhe entered it, flaſhed conviction upon her, in ſpite of his aſſeverations. She made further enquiries, and at length was informed by a ſervant, of the real ſtate of the caſe. Under the immediate ſhock which the painful certainty gave her, her firſt impulſe was to repair to him at the ready-furniſhed houſe he had provided for his new miſtreſs. The characteriſtic of her mind upon all trying occaſions, was energy; but it was a concentrated energy, active in reſolution, and not the unreſiſting ſlave of feeling;

disdaining to waste itself in the empty war of words, and never hurried into any thing incompatible with the elevation of her character. What was the particular nature of their conference I am unable to relate. It is sufficient to say that the wretchedness of the night which succeeded this fatal discovery, impressed her with the feeling, that she would sooner suffer a thousand deaths, than pass another of equal misery.

The agony of her mind determined her; and that determination gave her a desperate serenity. She resolved to plunge herself in the Thames, and took a boat for that purpose. Her first thought had led her to Battersea-bridge, but she found it too public, and accordingly proceeded further up the river. It was night when she arrived at Putney, and by that time it had begun to rain with

with great violence. The rain ſuggeſted to her the idea of walking up and down the bridge, till her clothes were thoroughly drenched and heavy with the wet, which ſhe did for half an hour without meeting a human being. She then threw herſelf from the top of the bridge, but ſtill ſeemed to find a difficulty in ſinking, which ſhe endeavoured to counteract by preſſing her clothes cloſely round her. After ſome time ſhe became inſenſible; but ſhe always ſpoke of the pain ſhe underwent, as ſuch, that, though ſhe could afterwards have determined upon almoſt any other ſpecies of voluntary death, it would have been impoſſible for her to reſolve upon encountering the ſame ſenſations again. I am doubtful, whether this is to be aſcribed to the mere nature of ſuffocation, or was not

rather

rather owing to the preternatural action of a desperate spirit.

How strange is the condition of our nature! The whole scene of human life may at last be pronounced a delusion! Speculation for ever deceives us, and is the appropriate office of castle-builders; but the active concerns of life cheat us still more! Mary was in the first instance mistaken in the object of her attachment, imputing to him qualities which, in the trial, proved to be imaginary. By insensible degrees she proceeded to stake her life upon the consequences of her error: and, for the disappointment of this choice, for a consideration so foreign to the true end of her powers and cultivation, she was willing to consign those powers and that cultivation, pregnant as they were with pleasure to herself and gratification

tion to others, formed to adorn ſociety, and give a reliſh the moſt delicate and unrivalled to domeſtic life, as well as, through the medium of the preſs, to delight, inſtruct, and reform mankind —ſhe was willing, I ſay, to conſign all theſe to premature deſtruction! How often is the ſagacity of our moral judgment reſerved for the hour of meditation, and how little does it ſometimes beſtead us in the time of our greateſt need!

After having been for a conſiderable time inſenſible, Mary was recovered by the exertions of thoſe by whom ſhe was taken from the water. She had ſought, with cool and deliberate firmneſs, to put a period to her exiſtence, and yet ſhe lived to have every proſpect of a long poſſeſſion of enjoyment and happineſs. It is perhaps not an unfrequent

quent caſe with ſuicides, that we find reaſon to ſuppoſe, if they had ſurvived their gloomy purpoſe, that they would, at a ſubſequent period, have been conſiderably happy. It ariſes indeed, in ſome meaſure, out of the very nature of a ſpirit of ſelf-deſtruction; which implies a degree of anguiſh, that the conſtitution of the human mind will not ſuffer to remain long undiminiſhed. This is a ſerious reflection. Probably no man would deſtroy himſelf from an impatience of preſent pain, if he felt a moral certainty that there were years of enjoyment ſtill in reſerve for him. It is perhaps a futile attempt, to think of reaſoning with a man in that ſtate of mind which precedes ſuicide. Moral reaſoning is nothing but the awakening of certain feelings; and the feeling by which he is actuated, is too

ſtrong

ſtrong to leave us much chance of impreſſing him with other feelings, that ſhould have force enough to counterbalance it. But, if the proſpect of future tranquillity and pleaſure cannot be expected to have much weight with a man under an immediate purpoſe of ſuicide, it is ſo much the more to be wiſhed, that men would impreſs their minds, in their ſober moments, with a conception, which, being rendered habitual, ſeems to promiſe to act as a ſucceſsful antidote in a paroxyſm of deſperation.

The preſent ſituation of Mary, of neceſſity produced ſome further intercourſe between her and Mr. Imlay. He ſent a phyſician to her; and Mrs. Chriſtie, at his deſire, prevailed on her to remove to her houſe in Finſbury-ſquare. In the mean time Mr. Imlay

Imlay assured her that his present was merely a casual, sensual connection; and, of course, fostered in her mind the idea that it would be once more in her choice to live with him. With whatever intention the idea was suggested, it was certainly calculated to increase the agitation of her mind. In one respect however it produced an effect unlike that which might most obviously have been looked for. It roused within her the characteristic energy of mind, which she seemed partially to have forgotten. She saw the necessity of bringing the affair to a point, and not suffering months and years to roll on in uncertainty and suspence. This idea inspired her with an extraordinary resolution. The language she employed, was, in effect, as follows: "If we are ever to live together

together again, it muſt be now. We meet now, or we part for ever. You ſay, You cannot abruptly break off the connection you have formed. It is unworthy of my courage and character, to wait the uncertain iſſue of that connection. I am determined to come to a deciſion. I conſent then, for the preſent, to live with you, and the woman to whom you have aſſociated yourſelf. I think it important that you ſhould learn habitually to feel for your child the affection of a father. But, if you reject this propoſal, here we end. You are now free. We will correſpond no more. We will have no intercourſe of any kind. I will be to you as a perſon that is dead."

The propoſal ſhe made, extraordinary and injudicious as it was, was at firſt accepted; and Mr. Imlay took her accordingly

accordingly to look at a houſe he was upon the point of hiring, that ſhe might judge whether it was calculated to pleaſe her. Upon ſecond thoughts however he retracted his conceſſion.

In the following month, Mr. Imlay, and the woman with whom he was at preſent connected, went to Paris, where they remained three months. Mary had, previouſly to this, fixed herſelf in a lodging in Finſbury-place, where, for ſome time, ſhe ſaw ſcarcely any one but Mrs. Chriſtie, for the ſake of whoſe neighbourhood ſhe had choſen this ſituation; "exiſting," as ſhe expreſſed it, "in a living tomb, and her life but an exerciſe of fortitude, continually on the ſtretch."

Thus circumſtanced, it was unavoidable for her thoughts to brood upon a paſſion, which all that ſhe had ſuffered had

had not yet been able to extinguiſh. Accordingly, as ſoon as Mr. Imlay returned to England, ſhe could not reſtrain herſelf from making another effort, and deſiring to ſee him once more. "During his abſence, affection had led her to make numberleſs excuſes for his conduct," and ſhe probably wiſhed to believe that his preſent connection was, as he repreſented it, purely of a caſual nature. To this application, ſhe obſerves, that "he returned no other anſwer, except declaring, with unjuſtifiable paſſion, that he would not ſee her."

This anſwer, though, at the moment, highly irritating to Mary, was not the ultimate cloſe of the affair. Mr. Chriſtie was connected in buſineſs with Mr. Imlay, at the ſame time that the houſe of Mr. Chriſtie was the

only one at which Mary habitually viſited. The conſequence of this was, that, when he had been already more than a fortnight in town, Mary called at Mr. Chriſtie's one evening, at a time when Mr. Imlay was in the parlour. The room was full of company. Mrs. Chriſtie heard Mary's voice in the hall, and haſtened to her, to prevent her from entering. Mary however was not to be controlled. She thought, as ſhe afterwards told me, that it was not conſiſtent with conſcious rectitude, that ſhe ſhould ſhrink, as if abaſhed, from the preſence of one by whom ſhe deemed herſelf injured. Her child was with her. She entered; and, in a firm manner, immediately led up the child, now near two years of age, to the knees of its father. While ſhe ſought relief for the anguiſh of her mind,

mind, the mother was ſtill uppermoſt in her geſtures and manner; and the appeal her action appeared to make, or rather the ſentence it inforced, would, one would have thought, have proved irreſiſtible. Mr. Imlay retired with Mary into another apartment, and promiſed to dine with her at her lodging, I believe, the next day.

In the interview which took place in conſequence of this appointment, he expreſſed himſelf to her in friendly terms, and in a manner calculated to ſooth her deſpair. Though he could act when abſent from her, in a way which ſhe cenſured as unfeeling; this ſpecies of ſternneſs conſtantly expired when he came into her preſence. Mary was prepared at this moment to catch at every phantom of happineſs; and the gentleneſs of his

carriage, was to her as a ſun-beam, awakening the hope of returning day. For an inſtant ſhe gave herſelf up to deluſive viſions; and, even after the period of delirium expired, ſhe ſtill dwelt, with an aching eye, upon the air-built and unſubſtantial proſpect of a reconciliation.

At his particular requeſt, ſhe retained the name of Imlay, which, a ſhort time before, he had ſeemed to diſpute with her. "It was not," as ſhe expreſſes herſelf in a letter to a friend, "for the world that ſhe did ſo—not in the leaſt—but ſhe was unwilling to cut the Gordian knot, or tear herſelf away in appearance, when ſhe could not in reality."

The day after this interview, ſhe ſet out upon a viſit to Berkſhire, where ſhe ſpent nearly the whole of the month of March. It was, I believe, while

while ſhe was upon this viſit, that ſome epiſtolary communication with Mr. Imlay, induced her reſolutely to expel from her mind all remaining doubt as to the iſſue of the affair.

Mary was now aware that every demand of forbearance towards him, of duty to her child, and even of indulgence to her own deep-rooted predilection, was diſcharged. She determined to rouſe herſelf, and caſt off for ever an attachment, which to her had been a ſpring of inexhauſtible bitterneſs. Her preſent reſidence among the ſcenes of nature, was favourable to this purpoſe. She had been amuſed and intereſted in her journey to Norway; but with this difference, that, at that time, her mind perpetually returned with trembling anxiety to conjectures reſpecting Mr. Imlay's future conduct, whereas now, with a lofty and undaunted ſpirit, ſhe

threw aſide every thought that recurred to him, while ſhe felt herſelf called upon to make one more effort for life and happineſs.

Once after this, to my knowledge, ſhe ſaw Mr. Imlay; probably, not long after her return to town. They met by accident upon the New Road; he alighted from his horſe, and walked with her for ſome time; and the rencounter paſſed, as ſhe aſſured me, without producing in her any oppreſſive emotion.

Be it obſerved, by the way, and I may be ſuppoſed beſt to have known the real ſtate of the caſe, ſhe never ſpoke of this perſon with acrimony, and was diſpleaſed when any one, in her hearing, expreſſed contempt of him. She was characteriſed by a ſtrong ſenſe of indignation; but her emotions of this ſort, however great might be the

the provocation that roused them, were short-lived, and in no long time subsided into a dignified serenenes and equanimity.

The question of their connection, as we have seen, was not completely dismissed till March 1796. But it is worthy to be observed, that she did not, like ordinary persons under extreme anguish of mind, suffer her understanding, in the mean time, to sink into listlessness and debility. The most inapprehensive reader may conceive what was the mental torture she endured, when he considers, that she was twice, with an interval of four months, from the end of May to the beginning of October, prompted by it to purposes of suicide. Yet in this period she wrote her Letters from Norway. Shortly after its expiration she prepared them

for the preſs, and they were publiſhed in the cloſe of that year. In January 1796, ſhe finiſhed the draught of a comedy, which turns, in the ſerious ſcenes, upon the incidents of her own ſtory. It remained among her papers at the period of her deceaſe; but it appeared to me to be in ſo crude and imperfect in a ſtate, that I judged it moſt reſpectful to her memory to commit it to the flames. To underſtand this extraordinary degree of activity, we muſt recollect however the entire ſolitude, in which moſt of her hours were at that time conſumed.

CHAP.

CHAP. IX.

1796, 1797.

I AM now led, by the progreſs of the ſtory, to the laſt branch of her hiſtory, the connection between Mary and myſelf. And this I ſhall relate with the ſame ſimplicity that has pervaded every other part of my narrative. If there ever were any motives of prudence or delicacy, that could impoſe a qualification upon the ſtory, they are now over. They could have no relation but to factitious rules of decorum. There are no circumſtances of her life, that, in the judgment of honour and reaſon,

reaſon, could brand her with diſgrace. She had errors; but her errors, which were not thoſe of a ſordid mind, were connected and interwoven with the qualities moſt characteriſtic of her diſpoſition and genius. Never did there exiſt a human being, that needed, with leſs fear, expoſe all their actions, and call upon the univerſe to judge them. An event of the moſt deplorable ſort, has awfully impoſed ſilence upon the gabble of frivolity.

We renewed our acquaintance in January 1796, but with no particular effect, except ſo far as ſympathy in her anguiſh, added in my mind to the reſpect I had always entertained for her talents. It was in the cloſe of that month that I read her Letters from Norway, and the impreſſion they produced

duced upon me has been already related.

It was on the fourteenth of April that I firſt ſaw her after her excurſion into Berkſhire. On that day ſhe called upon me in Somers Town, ſhe having, ſince her return, taken a lodging in Cumming-ſtreet, Pentonville, at no great diſtance from the place of my habitation. Her viſit, it ſeems, is to be deemed a deviation from etiquette; but ſhe had through life trampled on thoſe rules which are built on the aſſumption of the imbecility of her ſex; and had truſted to the clearneſs of her ſpirit for the direction of her conduct, and to the integrity of her views for the vindication of her character. Nor was ſhe deceived in her truſt. If, in the latter part of her life, ſhe departed from

from the morality of vulgar minds too decidedly to be forgiven by its abettors, be it remembered that, till this offence was given, calumny itſelf had not dared to utter an inſinuation againſt her.

The partiality we conceived for each other, was in that mode, which I have always regarded as the pureſt and moſt refined ſtyle of love. It grew with equal advances in the mind of each. It would have been impoſſible for the moſt minute obſerver to have ſaid who was before, and who was after. One ſex did not take the priority which long-eſtabliſhed cuſtom has awarded it, nor the other overſtep that delicacy which is ſo ſeverely impoſed. I am not conſcious that either party can aſſume to have been the agent or the patient, the toil-ſpreader or the prey. When, in the courſe of things, the

the diſcloſure came, there was nothing, in a manner, for either party to diſcloſe to the other.

In July 1796, I made an excurſion into the county of Norfolk, which occupied nearly the whole of that month. During this period Mary removed, from Cumming-ſtreet, Pentonville, to Judd-place Weſt, which may be conſidered as the extremity of Somers Town. In the former ſituation, ſhe had occupied a furniſhed lodging. She had meditated a tour to Italy or Switzerland, and knew not how ſoon ſhe ſhould ſet out with that view. Now however ſhe felt herſelf reconciled to a longer abode in England, probably without exactly knowing why this change had taken place in her mind. She had a quantity of furniture locked up at a broker's ever ſince her reſidence in

in Store-ſtreet, and ſhe now found it adviſeable to bring it into uſe. This circumſtance occaſioned her preſent removal.

The temporary ſeparation attendant on my little journey, had its effect on the mind of both parties. It gave a ſpace for the maturing of inclination. I believe that, during this interval, each furniſhed to the other the principal topic of ſolitary and daily contemplation. Abſence beſtows a refined and aërial delicacy upon affection, which it with difficulty acquires in any other way. The ſentiment produced, ſeems to reſemble the communication of ſpirits, without the medium, or the impediment, of this earthly frame.

When we met again, we met with new pleaſure, and, I may add, with a more deciſive preference for each other.

It

It was however three weeks longer, before the ſentiment which trembled upon the tongue, burſt from the lips of either. There was, as I have already ſaid, no period of throes and reſolute explanation attendant on the tale. It was friendſhip melting into love. Previouſly to our mutual declaration, each felt half-aſſured, yet each felt a certain anxiety to have aſſurance complete.

The ſort of connection of which I am here ſpeaking, between perſons with whom the intercourſe of mind, and not ſordid and caſual gratification, is the object propoſed, is certainly the moſt important choice in the departments of private life. Mary truſted to have found a heart with which ſhe might ſafely treaſure her world of affection; fearing to commit a miſtake, yet, in ſpite of her melancholy experience, fraught

fraught with that generous confidence, which, in a liberal ſpirit, is never extinguiſhed. I had never loved till now; or, at leaſt, had never nouriſhed a paſſion to the ſame growth, or met with an object ſo conſumately worthy.

We did not immediately marry. Ideas which I am now willing to denominate prejudices, made me by no means eager to conform to a ceremony as an individual, which, coupled with the conditions our laws annex to it, I ſhould undoubtedly, as a citizen, be deſirous to aboliſh. Fuller examination however has ſince taught me to rank this among thoſe caſes, where an accurate morality will direct us to comply with cuſtoms and inſtitutions, which, if we had had a voice in their introduction, it would have been incumbent on us to negative.

The

The motives of Mary, were not preciſely thoſe which influenced my judgment. She felt an entire conviction of the propriety of her conduct in forming this connection. It would be abſurd to ſuppoſe that, with a heart withered by deſertion, ſhe was not right to give way to the emotions of kindneſs which our intimacy produced, and to ſeek for that ſupport in friendſhip and affection, which could alone give pleaſure to her heart, and peace to her meditations. But ſhe had an extreme averſion to be made the topic of vulgar diſcuſſion; and, if there be any weakneſs in this, the dreadful trials through which ſhe had recently paſſed, may well plead its excuſe. She felt that ſhe had been too much, and too rudely ſpoken of in the former inſtance; and ſhe could not reſolve to do

any thing that ſhould immediately revive that painful topic.

I have nothing further that I find it neceſſary to record, till the commencement of April 1797. We then judged it proper to declare our marriage, which had taken place a little before. The principal motive for complying with this ceremony, was the circumſtance of Mary's being in a ſtate of pregnancy. She was unwilling, and perhaps with reaſon, to incur that excluſion from the ſociety of many valuable and excellent individuals, which cuſtom awards in caſes of this ſort. I ſhould have felt an extreme repugnance to the having cauſed her ſuch an inconvenience. And, after the experiment of ſeven months of as intimate an intercourſe as our reſpective modes of living would admit, there was certainly

tainly leſs hazard to either, in the ſubjecting ourſelves to thoſe conſequences which the laws of England annex to the relations of huſband and wife. On the ſixth of April we entered into poſſeſſion of a houſe, which had been taken by us in concert.

In this place I have a very curious circumſtance to notice, which I am happy to have occaſion to mention, as it tends to expoſe certain regulations of poliſhed ſociety, of which the abſurdity vies with the odiouſneſs. Mary had long poſſeſſed the advantage of an acquaintance with many perſons of genius, and with others whom the effects of an intercourſe with elegant ſociety, combined with a certain portion of information and good ſenſe, ſufficed to render amuſing companions. She had lately extended the circle of her

acquaintance in this reſpect; and her mind, trembling between the oppoſite impreſſions of paſt anguiſh and renovating tranquillity, found eaſe in this ſpecies of recreation. Wherever Mary appeared, admiration attended her. She had always diſplayed talents for converſation; but maturity of underſtanding, her travels, her long reſidence in France, the diſcipline of affliction, and the ſmiling, new-born peace which awaked a correſponding ſmile in her animated countenance, inexpreſſibly increaſed them. The way in which the ſtory of Mr. Imlay was treated in theſe polite circles, was probably the reſult of the partiality ſhe excited. Theſe elegant perſonages were divided between their cautious adherence to forms, and the deſire to ſeek their own gratification. Mary made

no

no ſecret of the nature of her connection with Mr. Imlay; and in one inſtance, I well know, ſhe put herſelf to the trouble of explaining it to a perſon totally indifferent to her, becauſe he never failed to publiſh every thing he knew, and, ſhe was ſure, would repeat her explanation to his numerous acquaintance. She was of too proud and generous a ſpirit to ſtoop to hypocriſy. Theſe perſons however, in ſpite of all that could be ſaid, perſiſted in ſhutting their eyes, and pretending they took her for a married woman.

Obſerve the conſequence of this! While ſhe was, and conſtantly profeſſed to be, an unmarried mother, ſhe was fit ſociety for the ſqueamiſh and the formal. The moment ſhe acknowledged herſelf a wife, the caſe was altered. Mary

and myſelf, ignorant as we were of theſe elevated refinements, ſuppoſed that our marriage would place her upon a ſurer footing in the calendar of poliſhed ſociety, than ever. But it forced theſe people to ſee the truth, and to confeſs their belief of what they had carefully been told; and this they could not forgive. Be it remarked, that the date of our marriage had nothing to do with this, that queſtion being never once mentioned during this period. Mary indeed had, till now, retained the name of Imlay which had firſt been aſſumed from neceſſity in France; but its being retained thus long, was purely from the aukwardneſs that attends the introduction of a change, and not from an apprehenſion of conſequences of this ſort. Her ſcrupulous explicitneſs as to the nature of her

her ſituation, ſurely ſufficed to make the name ſhe bore perfectly immaterial.

It is impoſſible to relate the particulars of ſuch a ſtory, but in the language of contempt and ridicule. A ſerious reflection however upon the whole, ought to awaken emotions of a different ſort. Mary retained the moſt numerous portion of her acquaintance, and the majority of thoſe whom ſhe principally valued. It was only the ſupporters and the ſubjects of the unprincipled manners of a court, that ſhe loſt. This however is immaterial. The tendency of the proceeding, ſtrictly conſidered, and uniformly acted upon, would have been to proſcribe her from all valuable ſociety. And who was the perſon proſcribed? The firmeſt champion, and, as I ſtrongly ſuſpect, the greateſt ornament her ſex ever had to

boaſt! A woman, with ſentiments as pure, as refined and as delicate, as ever inhabited a human heart! It is fit that ſuch perſons ſhould ſtand by, that we may have room enough for the dull and inſolent dictators, the gamblers and demireps of poliſhed ſociety!

Two of the perſons, the loſs of whoſe acquaintance Mary principally regretted upon this occaſion, were Mrs. Inchbald and Mrs. Siddons. Their acquaintance, it is perhaps fair to obſerve, is to be ranked among her recent acquiſitions. Mrs. Siddons, I am ſure, regretted the neceſſity, which ſhe conceived to be impoſed on her by the peculiarity of her ſituation, to conform to the rules I have deſcribed. She is endowed with that rich and generous ſenſibility, which ſhould beſt enable its poſſeſſor

poſſeſſor completely to feel the merits of her deceaſed friend. She very truly obſerves, in a letter now before me, that the Travels in Norway were read by no one, who was in poſſeſſion of "more reciprocity of feeling, or more deeply impreſſed with admiration of the writer's extraordinary powers."

Mary felt a tranſitory pang, when the conviction reached her of ſo unexpected a circumſtance, that was rather exquiſite. But ſhe diſdained to ſink under the injuſtice (as this, when traced to its ſource, will be found to be) of the ſupercilious and the fooliſh, and preſently ſhook off the impreſſion of the firſt ſurprize. That once ſubſided, I well know that the event was thought of with no emotions, but thoſe of ſuperiority to the injuſtice ſhe ſuſtained; and

was

was not of force enough, to diminiſh a happineſs, which ſeemed hourly to become more vigorous and firm.

I think I may venture to ſay, that no two perſons ever found in each other's ſociety a ſatisfaction more pure and refined. What it was in itſelf, can now only be known, in its full extent, to the ſurvivor. But, I believe, the ſerenity of her countenance, the increaſing ſweetneſs of her manners, and that conſciouſneſs of enjoyment that ſeemed ambitious that every one ſhe ſaw ſhould be happy as well as herſelf, were matters of general obſervation to all her acquaintance. She had always poſſeſſed, in an unparalleled degree, the art of communicating happineſs, and ſhe was now in the conſtant exerciſe of it. She ſeemed to have attained that ſituation, which her diſpoſition and character

ter imperiouſly demanded, but which ſhe had never before attained; and her underſtanding and her heart felt the benefit of it.

While we lived as near neighbours only, and before our laſt removal, her mind had attained conſiderable tranquillity, and was viſited but ſeldom by thoſe emotions of anguiſh, which had been but too familiar to her. But the improvement in this reſpect, which accrued upon our removal and eſtabliſhment, was extremely obvious. She was a worſhipper of domeſtic life. She loved to obſerve the growth of affection between me and her daughter, then three years of age, as well as my anxiety reſpecting the child not yet born. Pregnancy itſelf, unequal as the decree of nature ſeems to be in this reſpect, is the ſource of a thouſand endearments.

No

No one knew better than Mary how to extract ſentiments of exquiſite delight, from trifles, which a ſuſpicious and formal wiſdom would ſcarcely deign to remark. A little ride into the country with myſelf and the child, has ſome times produced an opening of the heart, a general expreſſion of confidence and affectionate ſoul, a ſort of infantine, yet dignified endearment, which thoſe who have felt may underſtand, but which I ſhould in vain attempt to pourtray.

In addition to our domeſtic pleaſures, I was fortunate enough to introduce her to ſome of my acquaintance of both ſexes, to whom ſhe attached herſelf with all the ardour of approbation and friendſhip.

Ours was not an idle happineſs, a paradiſe of ſelfiſh and tranſitory pleaſures.

ſures. It is perhaps ſcarcely neceſſary to mention, that, influenced by the ideas I had long entertained upon the ſubject of cohabitation, I engaged an apartment, about twenty doors from our houſe in the Polygon, Somers Town, which I deſigned for the purpoſe of my ſtudy and literary occupations. Trifles however will be intereſting to ſome readers, when they relate to the laſt period of the life of ſuch a perſon as Mary. I will add therefore that we were both of us of opinion, that it was poſſible for two perſons to be too uniformly in each other's ſociety. Influenced by that opinion, it was my practice to repair to the apartment I have mentioned as ſoon as I roſe, and frequently not to make my appearance in the Polygon, till the hour of dinner. We agreed in

condemning

condemning the notion, prevalent in many ſituations in life, that a man and his wife cannot viſit in mixed ſociety, but in company with each other; and we rather ſought occaſions of deviating from, than of complying with, this rule. By theſe means, though, for the moſt part, we ſpent the latter half of each day in one another's ſociety, yet we were in no danger of ſatiety. We ſeemed to combine, in a conſiderable degree, the novelty and lively ſenſation of a viſit, with the more delicious and heart-felt pleaſures of domeſtic life.

Whatever may be thought, in other reſpects, of the plan we laid down to ourſelves, we probably derived a real advantage from it, as to the conſtancy and uninterruptedneſs of our literary purſuits. Mary had a variety of projects

jects of this ſort, for the exerciſe of her talents, and the benefit of ſociety; and, if ſhe had lived, I believe the world would have had little reaſon to complain of any remiſſion of her induſtry. One of her projects, which has been already mentioned, was of a ſeries of Letters on the Management of Infants. Though ſhe had been for ſome time digeſting her ideas on this ſubject with a view to the preſs, I have found comparatively nothing that ſhe had committed to paper reſpecting it. Another project, of longer ſtanding, was of a ſeries of books for the inſtruction of children. A fragment ſhe left in execution of this project, is inſerted in her Poſthumous Works.

But the principal work, in which ſhe was engaged for more than twelve months before her deceaſe, was a novel, entitled,

entitled, The Wrongs of Woman. I ſhall not ſtop here to explain the nature of the work, as ſo much of it as was already written, is now given to the public. I ſhall only obſerve that, impreſſed, as ſhe could not fail to be, with the conſciouſneſs of her talents, ſhe was deſirous, in this inſtance, that they ſhould effect what they were capable of effecting. She was ſenſible how arduous a taſk it is to produce a truly excellent novel; and ſhe rouſed her faculties to grapple with it. All her other works were produced with a rapidity, that did not give her powers time fully to expand. But this was written ſlowly and with mature conſideration. She began it in ſeveral forms, which ſhe ſucceſſively rejected, after they were conſiderably advanced. She wrote many parts of the work

again

again and again, and, when ſhe had gone through what ſhe intended for the firſt part, ſhe felt herſelf more urgently ſtimulated to reviſe and improve what ſhe had written, then to proceed, with conſtancy of application, in the parts that were to follow.

CHAP. X.

I AM now led, by the courſe of my narrative, to the laſt fatal ſcene of her life. She was taken in labour on Wedneſday, the thirtieth of Auguſt. She had been ſomewhat indiſpoſed on the preceding Friday, the conſequence, I believe, of a ſudden alarm. But from that time ſhe was in perfect health. She was ſo far from being under any apprehenſion as to the difficulties of child-birth, as frequently to ridicule the faſhion of ladies in England, who keep their chamber for one full month after

after delivery. For herſelf, ſhe propoſed coming down to dinner on the day immediately following. She had already had ſome experience on the ſubject in the caſe of Fanny; and I cheerfully ſubmitted in every point to her judgment and her wiſdom. She hired no nurſe. Influenced by ideas of decorum, which certainly ought to have no place, at leaſt in caſes of danger, ſhe determined to have a woman to attend her in the capacity of midwife. She was ſenſible that the proper buſineſs of a midwife, in the inſtance of a natural labour, is to ſit by and wait for the operations of nature, which ſeldom, in theſe affairs, demand the interpoſition of art.

At five o'clock in the morning of the day of delivery, ſhe felt what ſhe conceived to be ſome notices of the ap-

proaching labour. Mrs. Blenkinſop, matron and midwife to the Weſtminſter Lying-in Hoſpital, who had ſeen Mary ſeveral times previous to her delivery, was ſoon after ſent for, and arrived about nine. During the whole day Mary was perfectly cheerful. Her pains came on ſlowly; and, in the morning, ſhe wrote ſeveral notes, three addreſſed to me, who had gone, as uſual, to my apartments, for the purpoſe of ſtudy. About two o'clock in the afternoon, ſhe went up to her chamber, —never more to deſcend.

The child was born at twenty minutes after eleven at night. Mary had requeſted that I would not come into the chamber till all was over, and ſignified her intention of then performing the intereſting office of preſenting the new-born child to its father. I was

fitting

ſitting in a parlour; and it was not till after two o'clock on Thurſday morning, that I received the alarming intelligence, that the placenta was not yet removed, and that the midwife dared not proceed any further, and gave her opinion for calling in a male practitioner. I accordingly went for Dr. Poignand, phyſician and man-midwife to the ſame hoſpital, who arrived between three and four hours after the birth of the child. He immediately proceeded to the extraction of the placenta, which he brought away in pieces, till he was ſatisfied that the whole was removed. In that point however it afterwards appeared that he was miſtaken.

The period from the birth of the child till about eight o'clock the next morning, was a period full of peril and alarm. The loſs of blood was conſi-

derable, and produced an almoſt uninterrupted ſeries of fainting fits. I went to the chamber ſoon after four in the morning, and found her in this ſtate. She told me ſome time on Thurſday, "that ſhe ſhould have died the preceding night, but that ſhe was determined not to leave me." She added, with one of thoſe ſmiles which ſo eminently illuminated her countenance, "that I ſhould not be like Porſon," alluding to the circumſtance of that great man having loſt his wife, after being only a few months married. Speaking of what ſhe had already paſſed through, ſhe declared, "that ſhe had never known what bodily pain was before."

On Thurſday morning, Dr. Poignand repeated his viſit. Mary had juſt before expreſſed ſome inclination to ſee Dr. George Fordyce, a man probably of

of more ſcience than any other medical profeſſor in England, and between whom and herſelf there had long ſubſiſted a mutual friendſhip. I mentioned this to Dr. Poignand, but he rather diſcountenanced the idea, obſerving that he ſaw no neceſſity for it, and that he ſuppoſed Dr. Fordyce was not particularly converſant with obſtetrical caſes; but that I would do as I pleaſed. After Dr. Poignand was gone, I determined to ſend for Dr. Fordyce. He accordingly ſaw the patient about three o'clock on Thurſday afternoon. He however perceived no particular cauſe of alarm; and, on that or the next day, quoted, as I am told, Mary's caſe, in a mixed company, as a corroboration of a favourite idea of his, of the propriety of employing females in the capacity of mid-

wives. Mary "had had a woman, and was doing extremely well."

What had paſſed however in the night between Wedneſday and Thurſday, had ſo far alarmed me, that I did not quit the houſe, and ſcarcely the chamber, during the following day. But my alarms wore off, as time advanced. Appearances were more favourable, than the exhauſted ſtate of the patient would almoſt have permitted me to expect. Friday morning therefore I devoted to a buſineſs of ſome urgency, which called me to different parts of the town, and which, before dinner, I happily completed. On my return, and during the evening, I received the moſt pleaſurable ſenſations from the promiſing ſtate of the patient. I was now perfectly ſatisfied that every thing was ſafe, and that, if

ſhe

ſhe did not take cold, or ſuffer from any external accident, her ſpeedy recovery was certain.

Saturday was a day leſs auſpicious than Friday, but not abſolutely alarming.

Sunday, the third of September, I now regard as the day, that finally decided on the fate of the object deareſt to my heart that the univerſe contained. Encouraged by what I conſidered as the progreſs of her recovery, I accompanied a friend in the morning in ſeveral calls, one of them as far as Kenſington, and did not return till dinner-time. On my return I found a degree of anxiety in every face, and was told that ſhe had had a ſort of ſhivering fit, and had expreſſed ſome anxiety at the length of my abſence. My ſiſter and a friend of hers, had been engaged

engaged to dine below ſtairs, but a meſſage was ſent to put them off, and Mary ordered that the cloth ſhould not be laid, as had been uſual, in the room immediately under her on the firſt floor, but in the ground-floor parlour. I felt a pang at having been ſo long and ſo unſeaſonably abſent, and determined that I would not repeat the fault.

In the evening ſhe had a ſecond ſhivering fit, the ſymptoms of which were in the higheſt degree alarming. Every muſcle of the body trembled, the teeth chattered, and the bed ſhook under her. This continued probably for five minutes. She told me, after it was over, that it had been a ſtruggle between life and death, and that ſhe had been more than once, in the courſe of it, at the point of expiring. I now apprehend theſe to have been the ſymptoms

toms of a decided mortification, occaſioned by the part of the placenta that remained in the womb. At the time however I was far from conſidering it in that light. When I went for Dr. Poignand, between two and three o'clock on the morning of Thurſday, deſpair was in my heart. The fact of the adheſion of the placenta was ſtated to me; and, ignorant as I was of obſtetrical ſcience, I felt as if the death of Mary was in a manner decided. But hope had re-viſited my boſom; and her chearings were ſo delightful, that I hugged her obſtinately to my heart. I was only mortified at what appeared to me a new delay in the recovery I ſo earneſtly longed for. I immediately ſent for Dr. Fordyce, who had been with her in the morning, as well as on the three preceding days. Dr. Poignand

nand had alſo called this morning, but declined paying any further viſits, as we had thought proper to call in Dr. Fordyce.

The progreſs of the diſeaſe was now uninterrupted. On Tueſday I found it neceſſary again to call in Dr. Fordyce in the afternoon, who brought with him Dr. Clarke of New Burlington-ſtreet, under the idea that ſome operation might be neceſſary. I have already ſaid, that I pertinacioufly perſiſted in viewing the fair ſide of things; and therefore the interval between Sunday and Tueſday evening, did not paſs without ſome mixture of cheerfulneſs. On Monday, Dr. Fordyce forbad the child's having the breaſt, and we therefore procured puppies to draw off the milk. This occaſioned ſome pleaſantry of Mary with me and the other attend-

ants.

ants. Nothing could exceed the equanimity, the patience and affectionateneſs of the poor ſufferer. I intreated her to recover; I dwelt with trembling fondneſs on every favourable circumſtance; and, as far as it was poſſible in ſo dreadful a ſituation, ſhe, by her ſmiles and kind ſpeeches, rewarded my affection.

Wedneſday was to me the day of greateſt torture in the melancholy ſeries. It was now decided that the only chance of ſupporting her through what ſhe had to ſuffer, was by ſupplying her rather freely with wine. This taſk was devolved upon me. I began about four o'clock in the afternoon. But for me, totally ignorant of the nature of diſeaſes and of the human frame, thus to play with a life that now ſeemed all that was dear to me in the

the univerſe, was too dreadful a taſk. I knew neither what was too much, nor what was too little. Having begun, I felt compelled, under every diſadvantage, to go on. This laſted for three hours. Towards the end of that time, I happened fooliſhly to aſk the ſervant who came out of the room, "What ſhe thought of her miſtreſs?" ſhe replied, "that, in her judgment, ſhe was going as faſt as poſſible." There are moments, when any creature that lives, has power to drive one into madneſs. I ſeemed to know the abſurdity of this reply; but that was of no conſequence. It added to the meaſure of my diſtraction. A little after ſeven I intreated a friend to go for Mr. Carliſle, and bring him inſtantly wherever he was to be found. He had voluntarily called on the patient on the preceding Saturday,

and

and two or three times ſince. He had ſeen her that morning, and had been earneſt in recommending the wine-diet. That day he dined four miles out of town, on the ſide of the metropolis which was furtheſt from us. Notwithſtanding this, my friend returned with him after three-quarters of an hour's abſence. No one who knows my friend, will wonder either at his eagerneſs or ſucceſs, when I name Mr. Baſil Montagu. The ſight of Mr. Carliſle thus unexpectedly, gave me a ſtronger alleviating ſenſation, than I thought it poſſible to experience.

Mr. Carliſle left us no more from Wedneſday evening, to the hour of her death. It was impoſſible to exceed his kindneſs and affectionate attention. It excited in every ſpectator a ſentiment like adoration. His conduct was uniformly

formly tender and anxious, ever upon the watch, obſerving every ſymptom, and eager to improve every favourable appearance. If ſkill or attention could have ſaved her, Mary would ſtill live.

In addition to Mr. Carliſle's conſtant preſence, ſhe had Dr. Fordyce and Dr. Clarke every day. She had for nurſes, or rather for friends, watching every occaſion to ſerve her, Mrs. Fenwick, author of an excellent novel, entitled Secrecy, another very kind and judicious lady, and a favourite female ſervant. I was ſcarcely ever out of the room. Four friends, Mr. Fenwick, Mr. Baſil Montagu, Mr. Marſhal, and Mr. Dyſon, ſat up nearly the whole of the laſt week of her exiſtence in the houſe, to be diſpatched, on any errand, to any part of the metropolis, at a moment's warning.

Mr.

Mr. Carliſle being in the chamber, I retired to bed for a few hours on Wednesday night. Towards morning he came into my room with an account that the patient was ſurpriſingly better. I went inſtantly into the chamber. But I now ſought to ſuppreſs every idea of hope. The greateſt anguiſh I have any conception of, conſiſts in that cruſhing of a new-born hope which I had already two or three times experienced. If Mary recovered, it was well, and I ſhould ſee it time enough. But it was too mighty a thought to bear being trifled with, and turned out and admitted in this abrupt way.

I had reaſon to rejoice in the firmneſs of my gloomy thoughts, when, about ten o'clock on Thurſday evening, Mr. Carliſle told us to prepare ourſelves, for we had reaſon to expect the

fatal event every moment. To my thinking, ſhe did not appear to be in that ſtate of total exhauſtion, which I ſuppoſed to precede death; but it is probable that death does not always take place by that gradual proceſs I had pictured to myſelf; a ſudden pang may accelerate his arrival. She did not die on Thurſday night.

Till now it does not appear that ſhe had any ſerious thoughts of dying, but on Friday and Saturday, the two laſt days of her life, ſhe occaſionally ſpoke as if ſhe expected it. This was however only at intervals; the thought did not ſeem to dwell upon her mind. Mr. Carliſle rejoiced in this. He obſerved, and there is great force in the ſuggeſtion, that there is no more pitiable object, than a ſick man, that knows he is dying. The thought muſt be expect-

ed

ed to deſtroy his courage, to co-operate with the diſeaſe, and to counteract every favourable effort of nature.

On theſe two days her faculties were in too decayed a ſtate, to be able to follow any train of ideas with force or any accuracy of connection. Her religion, as I have already ſhown, was not calculated to be the torment of a ſick bed; and, in fact, during her whole illneſs, not one word of a religious caſt fell from her lips.

She was affectionate and compliant to the laſt. I obſerved on Friday and Saturday nights, that, whenever her attendants recommended to her to ſleep, ſhe diſcovered her willingneſs to yield, by breathing, perhaps for the ſpace of a minute, in the manner of a perſon that ſleeps, though the effort,

from the ſtate of her diſorder, uſually proved ineffectual.

She was not tormented by uſeleſs contradiction. One night the ſervant, from an error in judgment, teazed her with idle expoſtulations, but ſhe complained of it grievouſly, and it was corrected. "Pray, pray, do not let her reaſon with me," was her expreſſion. Death itſelf is ſcarcely ſo dreadful to the enfeebled frame, as the monotonous importunity of nurſes everlaſtingly repeated.

Seeing that every hope was extinct, I was very deſirous of obtaining from her any directions that ſhe might wiſh to have followed after her deceaſe. Accordingly, on Saturday morning, I talked to her for a good while of the two children. In conformity to Mr. Carliſle's

Carliſle's maxim of not impreſſing the idea of death, I was obliged to manage my expreſſions. I therefore affected to proceed wholly upon the ground of her having been very ill, and that it would be ſome time before ſhe could expect to be well; wiſhing her to tell me any thing that ſhe would chooſe to have done reſpecting the children, as they would now be principally under my care. After having repeated this idea to her in a great variety of forms, ſhe at length ſaid, with a ſignificant tone of voice, "I know what you are thinking of," but added, that ſhe had nothing to communicate to me upon the ſubject.

The ſhivering fits had ceaſed entirely for the two laſt days. Mr. Carliſle obſerved that her continuance was almoſt miraculous, and he was on the watch

for favourable appearances, believing it highly improper to give up all hope, and remarking, that perhaps one in a million, of perſons in her ſtate might poſſibly recover. I conceive that not one in a million, unites ſo good a conſtitution of body and of mind.

Theſe were the amuſements of perſons in the very gulph of deſpair. At ſix o'clock on Sunday morning, September the tenth, Mr. Carliſle called me from my bed to which I had retired at one, in conformity to my requeſt, that I might not be left to receive all at once the intelligence that ſhe was no more. She expired at twenty minutes before eight.

HER remains were depoſited, on the fifteenth of September, at ten o'clock in

in the morning, in the church-yard of the pariſh-church of St. Pancras, Middleſex. A few of the perſons ſhe moſt eſteemed, attended the ceremony; and a plain monument has been erected on the ſpot, by ſome of her friends, with the following inſcription:

MARY WOLLSTONECRAFT GODWIN,

Author of

A VINDICATION

OF THE RIGHTS OF WOMAN:

Born 27 April, 1759:

Died 10 September, 1797.

THE loſs of the world in this admirable woman, I leave to other men to collect; my own I well know, nor can

it be improper to deſcribe it. I do not here allude to the pleaſures I enjoyed in her converſation: theſe increaſed every day, in proportion as we knew each other better, and as our mutual confidence increaſed. They can be meaſured only by the treaſures of her mind, and the virtues of her heart. But this is a ſubject for meditation, not for words. What I purpoſed alluding to, was the improvement that I have for ever loſt.

A circumſtance by which the two ſexes are particularly diſtinguiſhed from each other, is, that the one is accuſtomed more to the exerciſe of its reaſoning powers, and the other of its feelings. Women have a frame of body more delicate and ſuſceptible of impreſſion than men, and, in proportion as they receive a leſs intellectual education,

cation, are more unreſervedly under the empire of feeling. Feeling is liable to become a ſource of erroneous deciſions, becauſe a mind not accuſtomed to logical analyſis, cannot be expected accurately to diſcriminate between the ſimple dictates of an ingenuous mind, and the factitious ſentiments of a partial education. Habits of deduction enable us to correct this defect. But habits of deduction may generate habits of ſophiſtry; and ſcepticiſm and diſcuſſion, while they undermine our prejudices, have ſometimes a tendency to weaken or diſtort our feelings. Hence we may infer one of the advantages accruing from the aſſociation of perſons of an oppoſite ſex: they may be expected to counteract the principal miſtake into which either is in danger to fall.

Mary and myſelf perhaps each carried

ried farther than to its common extent the characteriſtic of the ſexes to which we belonged. I have been ſtimulated, as long as I can remember, by the love of intellectual diſtinction; but, as long as I can remember, I have been diſcouraged, when caſting the ſum of my intellectual value, by finding that I did not poſſeſs, in the degree of ſome other perſons, an intuitive ſenſe of the pleaſures of the imagination. Perhaps I feel them as vividly as moſt men; but it is often rather by an attentive conſideration, than an inſtantaneous ſurvey. They have been liable to fail of their effect in the firſt experiment; and my ſcepticiſm has often led me anxiouſly to call in the approved deciſions of taſte, as a guide to my judgment, or a countenance to my enthuſiaſm. One of the leading paſſions of my mind

mind has been an anxious desire not to be deceived. This has led me to view the topics of my reflection on all sides, and to examine and re-examine without end the questions that interest me. Endless disquisition however is not always the parent of certainty.

What I wanted in this respect, Mary possessed in a degree superior to any other person I ever knew. Her feelings had a character of peculiar strength and decision; and the discovery of them, whether in matters of taste or of moral virtue, she found herself unable to control. She had viewed the objects of nature with a lively sense and an ardent admiration, and had developed their beauties. Her education had been fortunately free from the prejudices of system and bigotry, and her sensitive and generous spirit was left to the

the ſpontaneous exerciſe of its own deciſions. The warmth of her heart defended her from artificial rules of judgment; and it is therefore ſurpriſing what a degree of ſoundneſs pervaded her ſentiments. In the ſtrict ſenſe of the term, ſhe had reaſoned comparatively little; and ſhe was therefore little ſubject to diffidence and ſcepticiſm. Yet a mind more candid in perceiving and retracting error, when it was pointed out to her, perhaps never exiſted. This aroſe naturally out of the directneſs of her ſentiments, and her fearleſs and unſtudied veracity.

A companion like this, excites and animates the mind. From ſuch an one we imbibe, what perhaps I principally wanted, the habit of minutely attending to firſt impreſſions, and juſtly appreciating them. Her taſte awakened mine;

mine; her ſenſibility determined me to a careful development of my feelings. She delighted to open her heart to the beauties of nature; and her propenſity in this reſpect led me to a more intimate contemplation of them. My ſcepticiſm in judging, yielded to the coincidence of another's judgment; and eſpecially when the judgment of that other was ſuch, that the more I made experiment of it, the more was I convinced of its rectitude.

The improvement I had reaſon to promiſe myſelf, was however yet in its commencement, when a fatal event, hoſtile to the moral intereſts of mankind, raviſhed from me the light of my ſteps, and left to me nothing but the conſciouſneſs of what I had poſſeſſed, and muſt now poſſeſs no more!

While

While I have described the improvement I was in the act of receiving, I believe I have put down the leading traits of her intellectual character from whom it flowed.

THE END.